

WORLD WAR II VETERANS PROJECT: INTERVIEWS WITH SEVENTEEN NEVADA VETERANS

Interviewee: Seventeen Nevada World War II veterans

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Description

A 1995 project was a departure from the University of Nevada Oral History Program's customary concentration on the history of Nevada and the Great Basin: the program commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Allied victory in World War II by recording the remembered experiences of a number of Nevadans who had served in that conflict. Oral historians Ken Adams and Vikki Ford interviewed thirty-eight veterans, and to these interviews were added three that had been done previously by others. Twenty-one of the interviews were subsequently selected for narrative interpretation in a UNOHP book called *War Stories*, which was published late in 1995. The remaining interviews are presented in this volume in lightly edited form. Each tells a moving, evocative story that contributes to the record in an important way.

Most educated adults have a good understanding of the strategic unfolding of America's participation in World War II, and of the great battles and how they relate to one another. These veterans' stories will add little to that understanding. They offer another dimension. Fifty years after Allied victory, this is military service at the personal level, as remembered by some Nevadans who experienced it. Recurrent themes include training, surviving combat, dealing with wounds and with the death of comrades, avoiding friendly fire, and accumulating points toward discharge.

Since these are personal narratives, in their particulars the stories vary as widely as individual human experience. They share only a tenuous connection: each is told by one who was there. Combined, they present a vivid picture of military service during the only war this country has fought without reservation and with certainty that its cause was just.

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An Oral History Conducted by
Ken Adams and Victoria Ford
July-August 1995

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

INTRODUCTION

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) systematically interviews persons who can provide firsthand description and authoritative analysis of events, people and places that may have historical significance. The products of this enterprise are the interview tapes and their transcripts, which are available to researchers at the UNOHP offices and through the University of Nevada libraries in Reno and Las Vegas.

A 1995 project was a departure from the UNOHP's customary concentration on the history of Nevada and the Great Basin: the program commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Allied victory in World War II by recording the remembered experiences of a number of Nevadans who had served in that conflict. Oral historians Ken Adams and Vikki Ford interviewed thirty-eight veterans, and to these interviews were added three that had been done previously by others. Verbatim transcripts of the tapes totaled approximately 1,800 pages. Twenty-one of the interviews were subsequently selected for narrative interpretation in a UNOHP book called *War*

Stories, which was published late in 1995. The remaining interviews are presented here in lightly edited form. Each tells a moving, evocative story that contributes to the record in an important way. (Two of the original chroniclers elected not to have their stories included in this collection, and at the time of writing a third had yet to return his reviewed and corrected transcript.)

No matter how articulate the chronicler and interviewer, when unrehearsed discourse is put into print its meaning can be concealed in a thicket of tortured syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences. Therefore, in the interests of facilitating use of the transcripts, the editors have made a few refinements to the text. While these changes do not alter the content, there may be some researchers who prefer to take their oral history straight — they are directed to the tape-recordings.

Most educated adults have a good understanding of the strategic unfolding of America's participation in World War II, and of the great battles and how they relate to one another. These veterans' stories will

add little to that understanding. They offer another dimension. Fifty years after Allied victory, this is military service at the personal level, as remembered by some Nevadans who experienced it. Recurrent themes include training, surviving combat, dealing with wounds and with the death of comrades, avoiding friendly fire, and accumulating points toward discharge.

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R.T. King
University of Nevada, Reno

LEE A. BAGBY

Ken Adams: Why don't we start by you telling us your name, where you were born, when you were born, a little about your family, and what life was like before you went into the service?

Lee A. Bagby: OK. My name is Lee A. Bagby. I was born in Kennett, California, in 1919. My dad was a railroad man. Shortly thereafter we moved to Red Bluff, California, where I spent my entire early life, went to elementary school, and graduated from Red Bluff High School in 1936. From there, I entered the service in 1937.

What was the Depression like in Red Bluff and for you?

Well, my impression of the Depression—it was very bad in those days. My dad being on the railroad, of course I and my uncle went on the railroad also. The Depression was just many, many people out of work that were riding the trains, and a lot of people begging, and lots of people out of work. We

were very lucky. My dad maintained his job with the railroad; he had enough seniority that we were able to have him working until such time as I went in the service.

Did the Depression have something to do with why you went in the service?

Yes, it did. My original plans, when I had graduated from high school and I had saved money through working—and I did at times work two to three jobs all at the time I was in high school and even elementary school—had been to go to the University of California at Berkeley. But when I graduated from high school, I would see these college graduates coming home. They'd end up working in jobs in filling stations and [other] mediocre jobs. At that time, I wasn't really sure of what I wanted to do, so I decided not to go to college. A friend and I decided to do a tour in the Navy and joined at the same time.

Why did you choose the Navy?



LEE A. BAGBY, U.S. NAVY, 1942

I don't know why I chose the Navy. I just happened to get interested in the Navy and talked to a Navy recruiter. The other fellow I had joined with, both of us talked to him, and we decided we would like to go in the Navy. We also had a good friend that had joined the Navy a couple of years before we did.

You graduated from high school in 1937?

1936.

And then

I spent a year working at a grocery store. I put in for the Navy when I was seventeen, against my mother's wishes. I had to wait

about six months to get in because they wanted to wait until I was eighteen for me to join, so I could do a full tour instead of doing what they call a "buddy tour," where you got out when you turned twenty-one.

You just went to San Francisco, talked to a recruiter, and signed up?

The recruiters came to the house. Finally, my dad and mother reluctantly said it was all right, and I signed up with the recruiter. I entered in Redding, California, and they sent me to San Francisco where I was enlisted in the Navy.

What month was that?

May 16, 1937.

Where did you get your training?

Naval Recruit Training Center in San Diego, California.

What was that like?

Oh, I didn't think it was so bad. In fact, I rather enjoyed it. It was very strict. We didn't get any liberty for the first month we were in. [There was] a lot of drilling and discipline and learning how to take care of yourself. I was marching one day when a bugle sounded a call and I said, "What's that?"

"Well, that's pay call."

"Pay?" I said, "You mean we get paid for doing this?" I had really enjoyed it so much, I'd forgotten that we got paid while we were in recruit training. [I received] the big sum of five dollars one payday and six dollars the other, because I had taken out ten dollars worth of life insurance for my dad and mother. The big deal since salary . . .

And your five dollars, you took down to the PX and bought . . . ?

Well, five dollars didn't go very far anywhere.

Was part of your training on a ship? Or was the first couple of months all on land? When did you go from just generic learning to march, fire a rifle, pack your sea bag to learning something about a Navy job?

Well, it was after basic training. We simulated everything up to that point. Then my first assignment, I got assigned to the destroyer, *USS MacDonough*, DD351, which was based out of San Diego. The ship was in Alaska at the time that I was supposed to report to it. So I went aboard the *USS Dobin* to wait for the ship to come in. I can remember vividly sleeping in hammocks and getting roused out at five o'clock in the morning to scrub the teak decks, and having breakfast and going on working parties all day long. Actually, I didn't get treated very well on the *Dobin*. My destroyer came back after I'd been aboard the *Dobin* about two months and I went aboard the destroyer at that time.

When you're assigned to your ship, do you have some specific tasks that you are supposed to do?

Yes, you do. When you were on the *Dobin*, they just used you for any job they happen to have that they want done. I was just aboard temporarily waiting for my ship, which was a destroyer, to come back to the tender. The *Dobin* was the destroyer's tender. Once I moved aboard the destroyer I was assigned to the deck force. I think I was a Seaman, Second Class. I got assigned to the captain's gig as a boatswain to keep the captain's gig clean, run

the boat, handle lines, and do the mediocre jobs. I enjoyed that very much.

What was your routine at sea and what was the daily routine?

Well, most of the time we spent all week at sea. Usually, the routine was that you would go out on Monday morning and you do exercises : gunnery and torpedoes and working with other ships in formations and anything that a destroyer is assigned to do until Friday. Usually on Friday afternoon we'd come back into port. Then we'd probably go back out again the next Monday.

Did you have good equipment?

For the times, yes, we did. The ship I went aboard was one of the first new ships that they'd built of that type, the destroyer type, since the old four pipers, which were built during World War I. We had eight ships in our squadron and they were the first of the new destroyers that had been built. I think my destroyer was finished in 1935.

With a peacetime Navy, sometimes people don't take it seriously. "This is just a big game. We're not training for a war. We're not doing anything and this is all meaningless stuff." Did you sense the war coming? Did people take it seriously?

Well, the first couple of years that I was aboard the ship. . . I stayed with the captain's gig for a couple of months. Then I stood watches on the bridge, look out watches and that type of duty. One of the officers took an interest in me and he asked me if I wanted to strike for quartermaster. I didn't even know what a quartermaster was, but I said yes, I thought I would. From then on in my Navy career I was

in the quartermaster branch, which is signaling, navigating, being a helmsman, and handling everything on the bridge. So I spent the rest of my tour aboard the *MacDonough* working on the bridge.

When you say, "strike for something," that's an apprenticeship?

You're learning to be . . . you're under training to be.

What specific thing did they start teaching you to do?

They'd teach you all the duties of being a quartermaster. On a destroyer, a quartermaster does ship's navigation, he takes care of all the charts, he takes care of all the clocks, he works as a signalman, and he has to know Morse code.

Did they teach all of that in an on-the-job training program?

[It was] all on-the-job training. I didn't go to any schools.

It must take a long time to learn all the facets of the

Well, it takes quite a while as a striker before they let you stand the bridge watch. For the usual bridge watch on a destroyer you have one quartermaster or signalman, and he does the whole job. During his watch period, he's in charge of doing that and it's quite a responsibility. You have to answer all the blinker messages, all the semaphore messages, and hoist all the flag signals. You also learn that being a helmsman it's just the navigation system, [a helmsman is a] navigator.

What does the helmsman do?

He steers the ship. My job eventually became my general quarter station, which is your battle station. I was a helmsman for the ship. They used me for when they were coming along side oilers and when we were going into difficult ports and stuff like that. I was assigned helmsman as my duty station and battle station, that type of detail.

Sounds like a movie where the captain of the ship yells, "Thirty-three degrees to the starboard!" in this little tube and you're this guy that makes

I'm the guy that goes, "Hard right!"
[laughter]

As an enlisted man you end up with, really, a huge responsibility.

The officers . . .

. . . make the decisions. But you have to execute them.

When you're on the bridge as an enlisted man, in a quartermaster position, you're assisting the officer on the deck all the time. Your duties are to assist him in navigating the ship, keeping bearings, and it's quite a responsibility. Usually we stood four on and eight off watches around the clock. Sometimes there is three or four months at a time where you stand four on, eight off, just time after time.

Isn't that exhausting?

Well, not really. You don't have anything else to do, because you're at sea most of the time. Of course, on the bridge when things

get busy, they'll call you back up when you're off watch. So you put in long days. There's long days.

And how long are you at sea? You would be at sea a couple of months at a time?

Oh, sometimes when you're going on these cruises. In those days you could be two or three months . . . Maybe you were anchored somewhere, but you still stood watches and everything.

Did you get to any interesting ports where you got to go on leave?

Oh, sure, we made every port that . . . It'd be hard to tell you all the ports, but early in my career we went to Pearl Harbor. About the first or second year we were supposed to go to the New York Fair and attend that on the East Coast. And we were en route to go to the Panama Canal. We were in some big exercise with the Pacific fleet, and then the Atlantic fleet. We stayed for two or three months in the Atlantic over in Cuba, and Haiti, and in that area, operating over there. We never did get to New York because at that time we were over there probably in 1938 and the hostilities with Japan were beginning to build up and they decided to send us back to the Pacific. So we went back to the West Coast again, before we got to finish all our drills.

Was it as much fun as they made it out to be in the movies?

Well, it was as much fun as you had money for. It really was. We had lots of good times. There was a little stuff you [couldn't do]. You couldn't get in trouble, [but] you couldn't do any of this type of stuff. In those days the officers were all career officers. Every officer

we ever had, until just shortly before I got off the ship in 1941, were all from the Naval Academy. They were all very fine officers and very, very, very good at their job.

You were on this ship until 1941?

I got off of the *MacDonough* in May of 1941. I had been aboard just two months shy of four years.

You must have reenlisted during this period of time.

Well, when I got off of the ship, that was the end of my four years. At that time I reenlisted. They were building the fleet up, getting ready for what would eventually turn into World War II, and Pearl Harbor.

You reenlisted in May of 1941.

By this time I'm a Second Class Quartermaster. I went to New York and joined the Motor Torpedo-boat Squadron, Squadron Two, which was one of the first two PT boat squadrons they ever had. When I arrived there I immediately got sent to New Port, Rhode Island, to go to PT school. My assigned job on the PT boat, of course, was quartermaster, which was to assist with the navigation and the signaling and the guns and all that type of stuff. When I got to PT's, at that time I made First Class Petty Officer. It was when I had less than five years in the Navy.

I'd better tell about the liberty stuff. Well, I could go back and tell them about some of the ports we visited while I was aboard the *MacDonough*; where we went, what we did and everything. We did make some good ports and we spent an awful lot of time at sea, more so than they do today because

there wasn't many ships. We'd been through the Depression and we hadn't really started to build up yet. The Navy was small, really small.

You said that sometimes when you didn't have any money that you stayed on ship.

I was always one pay day behind, because I'd borrow to go on liberty and then I'd have to wait on board until I could pay that back, so I could borrow enough to go on liberty again. We were young, you know.

Did you write a lot of letters?

Yes, I did. I kept a correspondence with my mother, my aunt and uncle, my brother and my friends. I wrote a lot. I had lots of time to write letters because we stood lots of watches where I was alone on the bridge. I'd be standing signal, watching the anchor, or in port you'd just have to be there and be on alert. When somebody's flashing light signals at you, running up flag posts, or something like this, you got to be [available to take the message]. You're on duty just for four hours at a time. A lot of the time you're not doing anything, but you have to be there watching.

How long was PT school?

About three months.

This is a technical school?

A PT boat is a boat that is seventy-seven feet long—the one I was on—and twenty-two feet wide and has three engines in it, Packard B12s. It's a type of operation where we were all petty officers; there were no seamen or anybody like that aboard. Everybody was

heavily skilled in their jobs and they were selected specifically for the PT boats.

How large was the crew?

Usually nine enlisted and two officers. Sometimes we had one officer.

What was the mission of the PT boat?

PT boats carry four torpedoes and four .50 caliber machine guns. Some of them had 20 millimeter guns on the fan tail. They're very fast; they're sixty knot vessels. The fastest I've been is at sixty knots on the Hudson River. They're made to go in and torpedo ships, which we did. We torpedoed everything from submarines to destroyers to cruisers. I don't think we ever, or I don't know of any of them that ever, hit a battleship. We did hit cruisers sometimes.

You would have finished PT school in July or August?

Probably late July or August I finished and then was assigned to PT 22, which was the second operational PT boat in the Navy.

Where was your home port?

Brooklyn at that time.

So you were preparing for the North Atlantic for

No, we were prepared to go anywhere. The PT boats, at that time, hadn't been deployed anywhere. They were new. They were just a whole new concept in the Navy. It was a concept that Roosevelt was personally interested in. And it was a very elite, handpicked type people that they put on

these PT boats. Everybody was very skilled in their work. There were no ordinary seaman or apprentice seaman. They were all ready people. The officers were anywhere from a lieutenant commander down to an ensign.

Is that when you got pretty good treatment, when you were in port?

Oh yes, it was wonderful treatment. In those days we never had court martials or masts or anything like that because the people just didn't get in trouble. They were high class people. Everybody knows what they have to do and how they're supposed to act and you're treated good. You get along well. You live right with the officers and you live close to them. It's just like we were flying pilot services, where you have your plane cruise and all that. It's a different world.

Were you with PT 22 all the way until Pearl Harbor?

No, I was on PT 22, probably, for several months, and then just before, maybe a month before Pearl harbor, they reshuffled. We had two squadrons: we had PT Squadron One and we had PT Squadron Two. They switched boats then. My squadron was PT Squadron Two. PT Squadron Two got all the odd numbered boats and PT Squadron One got all the even numbered boats. When that happened, just maybe a couple of months before Pearl Harbor, our whole crew switched to PT 39.

And still stationed the same . . .

We were still in Brooklyn; in and out for training.

Were you on PT 39 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

Yes. I was. We were at, I think, Glen Cove, Long Island. We were in this small shipyard getting mufflers, silencers for the engines and underwater exhaust, installed on our PT boats.

What did you think? Where were you when you first heard?

We had made some friends at Glen Cove and we were having breakfast and lunch at their house. You want to know where I was, exactly, when I first heard that?

Yes. [laughter]

I was on the can. [laughter] My buddy comes running upstairs to tell me that Pearl Harbor had just been attacked and I was in the can at the time. I remember that.

Everybody who wasn't in the service had to go through the emotion of, "What do we do now? Am I going to join the service? Where do we drive to? What branch of service? What am I going to do about my family?" and all the other things. You didn't have any of those decision to make. The Navy was going to . . .

All our people were career people.

The Navy was going to make whatever decision about where you were going to go. How did you feel? Were you anxious to go someplace and to fight somebody? What kind of emotions were . . . ?

Well, absolutely, we were ready; we were fully trained. We were very good at what we were doing and we had good equipment. We were well armed. But anyway, when we got the news of Pearl Harbor, of course, immediately, everybody was recalled back to the boats. We went back there and manned the machine

guns and took all the duties that we could possibly do.

Nobody really knew what was coming up. It was all, more or less, a surprise to all of us. Here we are, all of a sudden, facing a war. We knew that trouble had been brewing in the Orient and all that. While I was aboard the destroyer at Pearl Harbor for eighteen months, you could sense the feeling that our opponent, our enemy, was likely to be the Japanese. So my last year or two on the destroyer we were based at Pearl Harbor. Most of the Pacific Fleet [was based there]. They moved us all to Pearl Harbor. We went out to Pearl Harbor on maneuvers in 1939 and we never did return, we stayed.

Where was your former ship?

The *MacDonough* was tied up along side the *Domina*. The whole division of destroyers was tied up alongside the tender when Pearl Harbor [was bombed]. None of them got hit. They were over toward Pearl City and they weren't where the Japanese bombed at all. They weren't harmed at all.

After Pearl Harbor, what was the first assignment that the Navy gave you?

Well, after we got back to the boats, we finished the work in the shipyard, and immediately we went as quick as we possibly could back to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. All the PTs were assembled there. And we were ordered to Panama. One week after the war was declared, we were stationed in Balboa, Panama. We had twelve PT boats. We had the duty of protecting the Pacific side of the Panama Canal. Immediately we were assigned to the Perlas Islands, which are about thirty-five or forty miles in the Gulf of Panama, and anchored their on alert for twenty-four hours

a day. We kept all but one or two boats out of the twelve, out there until August of 1942. During that period we were in radio alert at all times. We lived aboard the boats. It was nothing real exciting but we had to be on board in case something did happen.

Each boat carried about 1,000 gallons of water. Water was our limiting factor in how long we could stay anchored out there. So about once a week, probably once every seven days, each boat went into Balboa, probably getting into Balboa in early afternoon. We'd take on water, and take on supplies, and take on gas, and did any repairs or anything that we needed. When all of that was done, which usually was around four o'clock in the afternoon, we got liberty. We were in two section liberty. Half the people got liberty from four to seven and the other half got liberty from seven to ten. Then it was curfew after that. And that's all the liberty we got for the whole eight months that we were doing these particular patrols.

At the end of the eight months we were suddenly called back into Balboa. We found out that we were going to form Motor Torpedo-boat Squadron Three—actually 3-2. We did not know where it was going. They selected eight PT boats and they made up eight crews of all the people that they had access to in Motor Torpedo-boat Squadron Two. We found out that we were to be deployed to the war zone. About a week after this, the first four boats sailed for the Pacific, not knowing where they were going, aboard two tankers. They had two PT boats to two different Navy tankers. Our section, maybe four days later, they loaded our four on a liberty ship, the *Joseph F. Stanton*, and we proceeded independently for thirty-one days, not knowing where we were going at all until we hit Nouméa and New Caledonia, which was out in the South Pacific. During

this time we steamed independently. We had the torpedo tubes strained out. In case we were attacked by anybody, we could use our torpedoes. The *Joseph F. Stanton* had one five inch gun with a Navy gun crew and we had our .50 calibers. And we really went a long way south. I don't know what latitude we got to, but we went down into real cold weather and then back up. Thirty-one days later we went into Nouméa and New Caledonia and found out from there, that we were going to a place that none of us had ever heard of, which was called Tulagi in Guadalcanal in the Pacific. Up to this time we hadn't been told where we were going or what we were going to be doing.

Up until this time, the war is still an abstraction to you.

Well, we knew that the war was going on, but our particular part in the war was spending eight months in the Perlas Islands, anchored out there. They did give us one little motorboat each so that we could fish, and there were beaches that we could go over to, as long as we could get back to the . . . We had to be in visual sight of the ship or the boat at all times. We did get in a little fishing and a little swimming and this type of stuff for recreation. But actually we had very little recreation. We'd get our ship's work done before noon and we'd play poker and play cards and do this type of stuff to pass the time away. Of course, the cook didn't care much for this because he was the only one that had to work afternoons or thereabouts, unless something was wrong. We had a cook by the name of Ding Howe. He was an old China sailor. Ding Howe had to serve us supper, that was his job, and sometimes he didn't think he had to work because we didn't have to work.

You ate twice a day?

We ate three times a day.

Small crew like that, you probably had pretty good food and . . .

We had excellent food. The boats had a galley on them. We had an auxiliary generator which we could run. When we had the range and the oven on, they had to run the auxiliary generator. We had refrigeration. It was small but we had what we needed.

What did you do to keep in shape? If you're eight months on a little ship like that, it would seem to me that unless you do something, you wouldn't be very fit.

We ate right. None of us gained any weight or got out of condition at all. We kept busy enough that . . . And we had very little health problems or anything like that. None of us seemed to get sick or anything. We had one hospital corpsman for the whole squadron, but he wasn't on the boat, see. He stayed ashore.

After the thirty-one days that you're off sailing by yourself . . .

We just entered Nouméa and New Caledonia on our own. But on the boat—I'll go back to this—we had a crew of two officers and nine enlisted people. The officers each had a tiny cabin. The captain had a little head and a wash basin to himself. And the crew's quarters, we all slept in bunks and each person had a small locker. That was all we had to keep our stuff in. All we had was whatever we had in our sea bags. It was pretty close living, but, surprisingly, everybody got along very well. We had hardly any trouble whatsoever. The people were picked for it. They were handpicked

for this type of thing, more or less like submarines' crews are.

When you got to New Caledonia, is that when you went into combat?

Well, when we got to New Caledonia we found out we were going to Tulagi, Guadalcanal, which is, oh I'd say, roughly, somewhere around 1,000 miles from New Caledonia, up toward the equator. We were south of the equator of course. There were two destroyer mines sweeps that were supposed to tow us to Tulagi. Tulagi is where our base was. Each minesweeper was to tow one PT boat; we used eight inch hawser lines for towing. The PT boats, one was on a short stay and the other was on a long stay of line, and one PT boat would have left rudder and the other one would have right rudder on it. And they tried to tow us all the way to Tulagi that way. First we went to Espiritu Santo, which is a group of islands about halfway between New Caledonia and Tulagi, in the Guadalcanal area. We stayed overnight there, long enough to get refueled with gas. On the way, if we'd run into rough weather or anything, the eight inch hawser lines would part and we'd have to run on our own engines. The four PT boats ran over half of the way on their engines, accompanied with the two DMSs. We went into Espiritu and stayed overnight there and refueled. The DMSs refueled and took on fifty gallon drums of gasoline. And we headed out again for Tulagi. By this time it was dark and they were towing us and we really didn't have a good idea where we were at all.

We arrived off Tulagi before daylight, on October 26, 1942. As we pulled in, there was a sea battle going on out between Tulagi and Guadalcanal out in the Savo Island area, Iron Bottom Sound, as they later called it. When we came in, they dropped us off [the two]. We

were at the entrance to go into Tulagi. And, in order to start the engines, you have to start your auxiliary power units, and as they started our auxiliary power unit, the thing caught fire. It flared up and, of course, we were all in darkness at this time. They deposited us at the entrance into Tulagi and while we were there, we got the fire out and everything was all right, and we got the engine started.

Coming out of Tulagi Harbor, there was a Navy tug, called a Seven-O, and a Y-P boat. I exchanged flicker messages with them, asking them who they were and we told them who we were. They said that their destination was Guadalcanal, which was twenty-two miles from where we were, across the bay. We proceeded and went ahead into the harbor. Another PT boat met us and led us up to our anchorage, where we were to tie up, which was along side the *U.S.S. Jamestown*, which was a PT tender that had arrived there just a few days before we had. Our other four boats had arrived, probably four or five days, maybe a week, before we had. We got with them, and got briefed. We moved off of the ship into some old Japanese bamboo huts. We were then given a thorough briefing on what was going on. The other boats had been there a week. They had already seen three or four nights of action while they were there, and had some horrendous experiences to tell us about by the time we got there.

But anyway, the first day we were there, we were tied up at the docks, stripping ship. We hadn't been there an hour, probably, and here comes this Japanese Zero right up close to where we were tied up. Chasing it was a F-4, or Wildcat, firing at it. That was our initiation into the war.

They had a river that let out back inland from where the tender was tied up, and that's where we were to tie up. We tied up to the river banks and camouflaged our boats in

the daytime with palm leaves and anything that we could make camouflage from, so the Japanese couldn't see us from the air. The Japanese knew nothing about our PT boats; they had been kept pretty secret. Even after the first boats had made their attacks on them, they weren't real sure of what they were up against.

The First Squadron, the first night they went out, there was a whole force of Japanese ships bombarding Henderson Field, which was the big airfield on Guadalcanal that we were trying to or had captured from the Japanese. There were battleships, cruisers, and destroyers in this force bombarding Henderson Field. Of course, in our PT boats we were taught to make high speed attacks; to go in at high speed, fire your torpedo's, and make high speed runs out. On the way in, we used our mufflers, which would allow us to go in at twenty-five knots, we'd fire our torpedoes, pull our mufflers, and then go full speed out. Well, the 1st Squadron, when the 1st Division went in on the first attacks, suddenly found themselves in the midst of all these Japanese ships. They had gone right in through the destroyer's screens and through the cruiser's screens, and were right in the middle of it. The Japanese started shining search lights on them. Well, everything ended up in a big melee. The Jap's were shooting at each other, and the torpedo boats were right in the middle of all the Japanese boats or ships. Nobody did anything the first night; they retired and went back to Tulagi to re-look the situation over. And what they had done, by going in at high speed, they had gone right through all the screens.

By screens, you mean the . . .

The protection for the battleships that were firing and bombarding Henderson Field.

The battleships were in the center and the cruisers were around them. And then on the outer ring, they have destroyers.

From that time on, well, we used a new approach on the way. We would go in at slow speeds—so they couldn't see our wake— get into a firing position, fire the torpedoes, and then we would pull our mufflers and retreat at high speed. That worked much better. They didn't sight us, and we were able to sight them before they sighted us and get a good firing on them.

What was your first combat mission?

The first day we were there, we had the Zero attack that night, or that day. We were tied up at the government pier. The Solomon Islands, Tulagi and all, at that time were owned by the British; they were a British possession. They had a government office there and we got most of our news through their radios and through our radios that we had established there. We had news of our deployments, and what we were supposed to do.

Well, we were tied at the dock. The first night we were there, we were ordered out [on combat]. We had no more than got settled in, and nobody had got any sleep or anything else. So we went out and had to spend the night. There were some destroyers out there but my particular boat, that night, didn't contact anybody. We usually went out at the end of daylight and we came home at dawn; we patrolled all night, every night. And until they had more boats, we never even got a night off. We were out every night from dark to daylight.

Your job was to patrol?

Our job was to combat the destroyers that were being sent up to the north to supply

Guadalcanal. The Japanese were getting in desperate shape over there. The way they were supplying their troops on Guadalcanal was what we called the "Tokyo Express." Every afternoon, they'd start a run of destroyers down through the Slot . . . down through all of the Solomon's, to arrive sometime around midnight. They would dump the people or they had boats waiting for them. Or they'd dump the rice or whatever they were bringing, and ammunition and all. A lot of it, they just dumped in the water and the Japanese would retrieve it. Then they would high-tail it out of there, trying to get out of there before daylight, when our airplanes could get out. Our particular mission out there was to intercept these destroyers and any other ships that were supplying Guadalcanal.

How effective were you against them? If you hit one, could you sink it?

You bet! As I said, when we first started, the Japanese didn't really know what we were. We had an element of surprise on our side. Our first action with the PT 39, we arrived there on the 26th, I believe, was the second night we were there. We were patrolling that night. My particular boat was patrolling outside of a line between Savo Island and Lunga point, which is on Guadalcanal. It was storming and raining and the thunderstorms were all over everything, and [lightning was] flashing. This particular night, I looked up and I spotted this Japanese destroyer. I immediately got on the radio, and alerted the rest of the PT boats in the patrol. Due to the thunderstorms and the darkness—and we always usually operated when there was no moon—we lost the destroyer. We didn't know where he went.

We still patrolled out there, in our area, back and forth. And about an hour, hour

and a half later, a flare popped up, and then another flare. Somebody had dropped a flare behind this destroyer that was high-tailing it out. There, apparently, had been three destroyers supplying the people. This flare lit up this destroyer that we spotted. The destroyer probably was doing about thirty-five knots, zig-zagging. And we were cruising back and forth and immediately, he headed toward us. We went up to twenty-eight knots, which is the speed of our torpedoes. You could see very well in the light of the flares. And just luckily, he zigged in front of us, and we made a run on him at twenty-eight knots on a collision course, I'd say up to under a thousand yards on him. We fired. We were supposed to fire four torpedoes; we actually got off three because the skipper missed one of the buttons. And not thinking, we're still heading in, just like the torpedoes were. Finally it came to me, I said, "We've got to get out of here!" So a hard left rudder—the skipper was at the helm and I was on the torpedo director—and he turned left, hard left. We went right and couldn't have been a hundred yards from where this destroyer was, going in opposite directions. About this time, the Japanese destroyer starts firing machine guns at us. Some of them were even going right through the cockpit. It was just the skipper and myself, we didn't have a second officer. Just when we got slightly after them, they got one volley, firing from their after guns, which hit in the water just ahead of our boat. It lifted the whole boat out of the water and then back into the water again. We went full speed and headed back to Tulagi. Luckily we got one torpedo head on the destroyer and sank it; that was the second night we were there. We didn't wait around to see. By then, we were anxious to get home as quick as we could, and get the heck out of there; which we did.

The next day, they went out and they retrieved some sailors that were off of the ship; they found a lifeboat with sailors. It was a confirmed kill that we got that night. That was just our first action. We got there in October, and I don't know how many different actions or battles or things that I was actually in.

Did you keep track of how many ships you sank?

Well, to my knowledge, my particular boat, the only sure one we got was the one we got on the second night. They had a record of all the kills of our squadron, and I think we probably had credit for about twelve ships. [We had] hits on cruisers. We even sank a submarine. We were pretty effective. The main effect we had was to let the Japanese know that something was out there. Our fleets were not there; we were the only Navy there outside of auxiliaries, tug boats, and small craft.

You sound like a cross between airplanes and guerilla fighters.

Well, we were. We did everything we could to stay alive is what we did. And as we went on, we got into more and more of this action. The destroyers, they got on to us, and they finally knew what we were. We could probably do about forty-five knots at that time, and Japanese destroyers could probably do up to thirty-five. Many times we'd go in to make an attack on a destroyer. The destroyer would spot us before we got in there, light us up with a search light, and it was just like daylight. Then they'd start firing at us. Well, we'd have to turn and high-tail it out of there; get out of there as fast as we could. Sometimes, it just looked like rain on

the water, and, at night, you can see all the shells. We really were under some perfect fire time after time, after time.

One of the things that you said was that you got sick. You were telling about malaria.

Well, there was a lot of malaria in the area out there. I would say between a half and three quarters of our people got malaria while they were there. Our ship's cook, and our engineer, and our radioman all had malaria. But they had no . . .

Did they get replaced or did they stay there?

We had to stay there.

And still go out every night?

That's right. One of the boats out of the eight, they ran it aground one night and put it out of commission. Then we would rotate around and maybe we'd have one night off out of seven. In other words, they had eight crews and seven boats.

And you kept that up for four months?

Until the latter part of November, we were out every night. Then another squadron came in, PT Squadron Two; what was left of it when we left Panama. It was after the big battle, so they got there, probably, in December. Then we would maybe get a night off a week, or something like that. They had a movie there by then. We lived with the marines. And actually, we were under the control of General Vandegrif. The 1st Marine Division, reinforced, is the outfit we were actually serving with. But Navy wise, we were under the commander of the South Pacific, which was Admiral Halsey; that was our

immediate chain of command. But during the time when we were in the Tulagi area, we were actually operating with the 1st Marine Division. We lived ashore with them and we ate with them.

How did they treat you?

Oh, they treated us pretty good, with what they had. We didn't have very much.

Sometimes between the Navy and the Marines, there is no respect. Sometimes they don't respect each other very well. But under these conditions, I'm guessing they probably treated you pretty nicely.

They did. There was not any friction at all. After you get into your first few nights' actions, and get in and see this stuff, and see how serious it is, your only thoughts are what you've got to do to get out of this thing alive. Or are we ever going to get out of it alive? Because there was one point, when the major battles all took place in November, when they were talking about pulling us all out and abandoning Guadalcanal. I remember one day, in November that . . .

You thought you were going to leave Guadalcanal?

Yes, there was a possibility that we were going to have to pull out. We would have just have to have made a run, probably for someplace that . . . But they didn't pull us out and we did stay.

Our crew, each day that went by, they were getting tired [sic] and tired and a lot of them had malaria and fever and all this type of stuff. There was just absolutely nobody to replace you, so we had to stay there.

Did they have quinine tablets?

I was lucky. I knew a hospital corpsman when I was in Panama. Just before we left Panama, I was ashore with him and we were talking. We knew we were going somewhere, but we didn't know where we were going. He was guessing from what he had heard about everything, that we were probably heading for the South Pacific. This friend of mine fixed me up with a bottle of quinine. He said, "If you get in an area where they do have malaria, here is quinine for yourself."

The other people were put on something called Atabrine. Atabrine was supposed to protect you against malaria, but it was not nearly as effective as quinine. And Atabrine turned everybody that took it, a yellowish color; their skin and everything turned yellow. But it wasn't as near as effective as quinine. But I was lucky. I probably had maybe a hundred, a hundred and fifty pills that this guy had given me and I took one every day and I never got malaria.

How long after you left the zone did you stop taking the pills? Do you remember?

After I left there, I didn't take them anymore, and had no problems with it. I left the area due to illness, probably about the first of March, about the time our squadron was relieved.

So you'd been . . . August 26, you went in?

We went in October 26. I was taken out on a YP boat with a very bad case of diarrhea that they couldn't get stopped. I weighed 125 pounds on that day. They sent me down to Nouméa and then on down to New Zealand where later my . . .

How much did you weigh before you got sick?

Oh, probably 140, 145. But by this time everybody was worn to a frazzle. We were not really effective because everybody was . . . actually, we were scared to death. After you get out there and you get shot at so much and you operate under these conditions and you don't see a way out . . . Anybody who says that they go into battle and are not scared, I don't believe they're telling the truth. We got fired on so heavy and we really realized what we were up against, that after the first night, our feelings changed and we were operating under fear after that. The more we got into it, the worse it got.

On my particular boat, on our way to Tulagi from New Caledonia, we had an ensign in charge of the boat and we had an ensign as an executive officer. We were coming alongside the *Trevor*, which was the DMS that was towing us, to get something from the ship. I don't know whether we were getting fuel or what we were getting. The second officer tried to use his leg to fend off this PT boat coming alongside the DMS. He broke his leg very badly so they took him off our boat. During this whole period out there, I operated as the second officer on the boat. There was only two people that were operating the boat and handling the firing, and actually running and steering and doing all this.

You were responsible for steering, for communication, and firing the torpedoes?

We had a radioman on board, but I was responsible for all visual communications.

Who fired the machine guns? You said you had .50 caliber machine guns.

Well, we had a gunner's mate and we used the ship's cook. We had two turrets with two .50 caliber machine guns.

The cook doubled as a . . .

. . . doubled as a gunner.

He must have had an attitude by the time it was over, too.

We didn't have a gunner's mate, we had a torpedo man, but he knew the guns.

You went in October . . .

We were relieved about the end of February. The Japanese evacuated Guadalcanal on around the 22 of February, I believe it was. They finally got out completely.

You had five months?

It was about four months, I would say.

You were sick and they were taking you off. Where were they taking you?

Well, I ended up in New Zealand. I had to take all these physical exams and all that and they put me on good food. I found out that sure, there were these things called women.

Woo! Ha!

So, we stayed on New Zealand until we got well enough; or I did. I was with some other people. From then on we went on liberty. We had nothing, hardly, to do.

For fourteen months or so, you really hadn't seen any women?

We hadn't been around very much. Where we were, women were very scarce.

Did the girls in New Zealand treat you pretty nicely?

Oh, you bet. They treated us fine. Once we got well enough, we had a good time in New Zealand.

But anyway, while we were in the Solomon's, we had major actions from the 12 of November until the morning of the 16 of November. Then we had another major action. This is when we were involved with battleships, cruisers, and destroyers all firing at each other. We were there through those whole three major battles.

The big ships are out there, these great big monsters, firing their big guns at each other and here you are, this little thing running around there trying to

Let me tell you what happened to us the first night. We were innocent ; knowing nothing , told nothing. Three boats were patrolling between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. Guadalcanal was here and Savo Island here and the Japanese have got this part of Guadalcanal occupied. Our part was way down here, and we were patrolling back and forth between here to intercept the destroyers. They had two ways of getting in here. There were two channels. There was this one through Savo and then one the other side of Savo. They'd get in across this way. We were patrolling right here. We had been unloading transports, reinforcing the Marines, but they had sailed that day and taken all our cruisers and destroyers with them.

They got word, which we never did get, that there was a big Japanese force coming in to try to take back Guadalcanal. They had

already had one major skirmish about two or three weeks before we got there, where cruisers and destroyers got into it with the Japanese battleships and cruisers and destroyers. We had a whole bunch of ships sunk that time. The Japanese had a few sunk.

But anyway, the night I was telling you about, we were patrolling. It's a real dark, dark night, storming again, and about, oh, I guess it's twelve-thirty at night. Goddamn! All hell breaks loose! Guns going off everywhere and here we are. They're coming right down alongside Guadalcanal like this. Some of the Japanese are coming along this way and some this way and here we are here. And those damn fools opened fire right over the top of our three PT boats. Each force fired, approaching each other in the dark. And we're right in the middle where the war's going on. Man! We took one look at that and We had no idea that they were ever going to have major naval conflict right there that night. But immediately, we could see it was way out of our league. We ran the twenty-two miles back to the entrance of Tulagi Harbor, laid to, and watched these ships go at it . . . man, oh man!

Twenty-two miles away, when some of those ships would blow up, you could read a newspaper right there in the dark. There was just cruisers and destroyers and battleships firing at each other. So we laid to up there until morning.

Did it feel like the end of the world?

We didn't know. We thought it was the end of the world! We didn't know what it was. We didn't know. We had no idea what was going on. Nobody had ever told us a thing about it. And they never told us anything on the radio. And here you are suddenly in the middle of a major navy conflict.

Come daylight, then we received a message for us to go out and see what the conditions were out there from Guadalcanal. Guadalcanal was under Vandegrif, and they wanted to know what was the results of the night's actions, because they had no contact with them either, apparently. We started out and the first ship we come to is one of ours, the *Helena*. I saw so many, I can't remember which is which. But it was one of our newer destroyers and it was burning from one end to the other. Literally, the paint was burning on that ship, it was so hot. The paint itself was burning, even up the masts and on the mast moves, the horizontal on top. The whole ship was afire. We approached it and tried to see if anybody was alive. There was, apparently, nobody alive on the ship. It was just a blazing wreck. Apparently they all had abandoned ship. Then we found some cruisers, picked up some survivors, did everything we could do, and went back into port.

Both forces by then had separated. The Americans were fleeing with their battled-up ships; they left three or four destroyers and a cruiser and some other ships there that were so badly damaged, they couldn't get underway. The *Atlanta*, the *Portland*, and the *San Francisco* had been sunk. All kinds of havoc had gone on that night.

But anyway, we came back into port. And the next night we were sent out again. This night, we were sent out to sink our own ship, the *Atlanta*, which was drifting. They had taken all of the people off of it, and it was just abandoned there. But they were afraid maybe it was going to fall into the hands of the Japanese, so they wanted it sunk. So about nine o'clock at night, they told us to go out and sink it with torpedoes. And the last thing we got is, "Anything you see out there is enemy. You're free to fire on anything that's out there." Except, of course, the *Atlanta* was down there,

but the rest of our forces supposedly had got out of there.

Well, they forgot to tell us about one thing. The *USS Portland* had been left out there with its rudder damaged and it hadn't escaped with the rest of the ships. It was trying to make it's way back to Tulagi under tow of a tug. We get on our way, heading toward Guadalcanal where the *Atlanta* is and, Jesus, I looked up and I told the skipper, "Look up there! There's a cruiser." We looked at it and sure enough, [it was]. I took my booker tube, which is a flashing light deal, and gave the . . . We have a code for each day and each hour that is a recognition code. You have to [know] what code is effective at that moment. So I signaled them with the recognition code. I did this three or four times, but nobody answered. Well, they said everything that's out here was foreign, that we were cleared to fire on anything.

So we started torpedoing the ship. We get on a course to fire our torpedoes. I figured the ship was doing about fifteen knots. I was on the torpedo director, and I led the ship for fifteen knots of speed. We fired four torpedoes, and we had no more got them in the water when the goddamn ship answered up the code. They gave their call sign and it was the *USS Portland* and here our torpedoes are running. So I did get off in time to tell them that our torpedoes are in the water. And luckily, it was so dark we couldn't see. We didn't know really what was going on, but we did fire at them.

The *Portland* was being towed by this tug on a long line, and I'll be goddamned! All four of our torpedoes went between the tug and the *Portland*. We missed them.

Sounds like, among other things, that you guys were pretty mad by this point. You were mad at the . . .

They were goddamn mad, I'll tell you. The *Portland* was damned mad.

But you felt the same way. They don't tell you what's going on. One minute you're out in the middle of a battle, the next minute . . .

Well, that's the kind of communications we had.

Nobody cares about you, you're too little. It occurs to me that most everything in the Navy is commanded by high ranking officers.

That's right. When you're way out into the middle of nowhere like we are and you're . . .

You're commanded by an ensign in a . . .

What command, or what communications we had with anybody, was through what was going on with the Marines over at . . .

How many officers would be on those big ships?

Well, on a destroyer, probably twelve, something like that. On cruisers, probably forty or fifty.

How many ensigns would be in there?

Probably half a dozen on a cruiser. Maybe one on a destroyer.

So, I take it that you're so far down the line that communicating with an ensign is the last thing on anybody's mind.

The big ships were probably in communication with each other.

You just weren't important enough . . .

We were . . . but they weren't in communication with our lines of communication. So we, more or less, were out there to fend for ourselves, was what it amounted to.

And as easily as you shot somebody by mistake, they could have been shooting at you by mistake.

Certainly. Well, that's why after I flashed the code at them and they didn't answer, I supposed it was a Japanese ship. They saw my blinker message, and they didn't understand it. What's the first thing they're going to do? They're going to blow you out of the water. If you fiddle around trying to figure out who's who and what's what . . . There was a lot of that going on in those [battles] . . . not only with us PT boats, but between the ships themselves. It's all written up in history. How they ran through each other this very night. That they didn't have good radar and the radar they had was new and the people didn't believe it. The ships ended up steaming right through each other, practically hitting each other, almost colliding with each other. That's how close they were in this battle. We were shooting at our own ships. The Japs were shooting at their ships. The Japs were shooting at us; we were shooting at the Japs. It was the biggest confusion you ever saw.

You said that after February 22, you would have been taken off anyway, because you were sick. You went to New Zealand and were finally recovered enough to go and find some girls and . . .

To chase the girls.

How long were you in New Zealand?

We were in New Zealand two weeks.

Two weeks? And then . . .

Do you want to know anymore about these major battles that were out there?

Yes.

Well, anyway, let's continue. This particular Japanese fleet that came down to retake Guadalcanal . . . [The battle] started the night of the 12th, [and continued] the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th. We were out in action all four of those nights, with contact with the Japanese. Our ships were in contact with the other ships.

Well, they got this first battle over with and the *Portland* didn't get sunk by us. They scuttled the *Atlanta*. We went back to our base in Tulagi and tied up there. The *Portland's* got the bow blown off; not from us, but from a Japanese torpedo the night before when they got hit. They got hit in the rudder and they got hit in the bow, and the whole fore part of the bow was blown off. Well, they tied them up at the buoy right next to where our PT boat is. The ship was anchored right next to us. And, of course, by then they know that we fired the torpedoes at them. We could have put them under, you know. They were not very warm to us for a while, there. Anyway, they stayed there until they got their bow redid and then they sent them to Australia or somewhere.

But anyway, this battle went on the whole weekend. And in the final action we, one night, well, we fired our torpedoes at our own ship. We went back and replenished the next day. As each boat got replenished and got ready to go, they sent them out. Well, we didn't get through. We worked all day, but we didn't get through in time, by ten o'clock

at night. They sent us out. And this time, we were heading up Florida Island, which is right where Tulagi is. We were going to go along the Florida Island and head to the left to go to Savo, because we were supposed to take a patrol out there again. And again, nobody told us anybody was coming in.

Well, the other two PT boats that we have in commission at this time, they were already out. They're patrolling out there somewhere. We don't even know where. They're back and forth and just on station. It was suicide. It was just a suicide mission because the Japanese had battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and they were escorting twenty transports that they were going to land.

And you have four torpedoes?

We had in commission and out there at that particular time, three PT boats.

Just as we were turning and heading towards Savo Island, I looked up and spotted a destroyer coming in. I could just barely make it out. Either the lightening flashed or something so I got a close up [look]. The skipper and I reported it to the other torpedo boats. We were getting ready to make a run on it, to try to get it, when right out of the clear on our radios, "Cactus Control," which is Henderson Field at Guadalcanal, "This is Willis Lee. Cactus will know who Willis Lee is; or the Cactus general will know who Willis is." Willis Lee was the admiral in charge of the battleships under Halsey. We didn't know any of this. We didn't know who Willis was either. "We're coming through." That's all he said. "PT boats retire. This is Willis Lee. PT boats retire. I'm coming through."

It was two battleships, the *Washington* and the *South Dakota*, and four destroyers. We went over to Florida Island, which was

the closest land next to us and just laid to. This was about two-thirty in the morning or something like that. It was late. We laid to and watched this go on that night. The *South Dakota* and the *Washington* took on that whole force. They took on the battleships, the cruisers, the destroyers, and the transports. They sunk a battleship and they sank half the transports. The Japs just gave up. Four of the transports went over and beached themselves on Guadalcanal. The Japanese forces were just defeated.

They started trying to get out of there then. They realized that we had a major force there. They got one battleship, a Japanese battleship, out of it that night. It sank the next day. And again, we didn't have any idea of what was going on and it started right over the top of us, you know, right close to us. It was quite an experience. That ended that particular period of battle.

However, on the 30 of November, we got into another battle. We knew about this one. The cruisers had sent all their seaplanes into Tulagi harbor to get them off of the ships so they wouldn't get damaged by gunfire. They were going to have a spot for them when the forces came in. We had word that night that we were to stay in; that we had five or six cruisers and maybe seven or eight destroyers in there to go to hit the Tokyo Express when it came in that night. Another big force of Japanese cruisers and battleships and destroyers came in.

That night we just watched it. The Japanese sank the *Northampton*. They blew the bows off of the *Minneapolis* and the *New Orleans*. The *Salt Lake City* was ablaze on the stern. The next morning we went out and the *Northampton* was put over by Guadalcanal, so badly damaged that she had sunk. These ships were coming in just as we were going out. There were these three cruisers with the

bows blown off of them, another one with an after section all aflame.

We were headed out to go try pick the survivors up off of the *Northampton*; which we did. I don't know how many survivors were picked up. I'd estimate, on our boat, we probably picked up fifty or sixty. We had no doctor or anything aboard. The survivors had been in the water and they were oily and burnt. Some of them were in real bad condition. We did have some morphine Syrettes that we had in our medical kits. The ones that were in real bad shape, we did try to ease their pain. But a number of them died before we got back. We brought them back to shore and the medics took care of them.

That was the last big battle that they had under this operation. That was the last major forces that came in. We lost a number of PT boats, but it always against destroyers. We started losing more and more PT boats because they knew what we were. They were damn near as fast as we were, and they were on the water before we were. Our particular squadron was very lucky; we lived. In fact, all of us lived through it. Some of the other squadrons, they took heavy damage, lost numbers of . . .

Do you know any of those men, still, today?

I know a lot of them in my squadron, yes. I still get the newspaper. It comes out once every quarter or every six months. I belong to the PT Boat Association, which is an outfit in Memphis. Originally, it was made up of all the members of the PT boats. Later, they took in their tenders and all this. But, yes, I still keep in contact with several off my boat. I keep in touch with the first ensign I had on the PT boat. I exchange Christmas cards with one of our engineers

and a quartermaster. There's an awful lot of our people who have passed on; there's not too many left.

Of anybody in the military, there must be few who are as close and who were in as intense a situation as the nine of you.

When we were out there, when people would get sick, we would substitute, on top of doing our own [work]. But even after we got our boats out of there, people started getting sick and I would have to go out as a quartermaster. We got in a lot of gunfire and people shooting at us

The whole squadron stays close.

Yes. Usually you tried to stay with your own bunk, but there were occasions where I had to go out maybe a half a dozen times with different skippers and different crews. A number of those times, we got into action with the Japanese destroyers.

What happened to the ensign who commanded your PT?

He's in Florida. I think he's still alive. His name was Brent Green. He was a brand new ensign. He's was one of those three month officers who came up there and

The army called them "ninety-day wonders."

A "ninety-day wonder" is what he was. He came to Panama and joined our boat crew there. The boat crew is highly

Was there a little resentment?

No, there wasn't any resentment. The boat crew were highly skilled people. The

first officers that we had, the majority were good officers and were career people. The more that we went on and got into the war, then they started replacing all of those people with "ninety-day wonders." This particular ensign I served under, in 1939 he came aboard when we were heading for the Pacific. He was a "ninety-day wonder"; he didn't know anything. He had never ever in his life seen a gun fired. Especially at night, if we had a dispersed action, when those guns went off so close to us and they were shooting at us . . . Talk about sheer terror.

You had to start taking responsibilities and start making decisions.

I had to take the responsibility because he was so scared. This is nothing against the man, he turned out to be a fine officer. But he hadn't ever experienced any of this. He was in the bottom of the cockpit because he was so scared. I had to get him out of it afterwards. I never have really told anybody and never told anybody at the time about that. And he later became very proficient.

One night, it was getting along toward January or February, the moon had come up. When the moon came up there was a lot of light, and they could see us before we could see them. We weren't very effective at night when the moon was up. This night the skipper had sent me down below the cockpit. We had a bridge area there that you could also run to. He said, "Why don't you get down there, put your life jacket down there, and get a couple of hours of sleep?"

I said, "OK, skipper. If you want me to."

It didn't look like there was going to be any action. I told him just exactly which way to go with the PT boat so he wouldn't run aground with the rocks and things. We were patrolling right off the Guadalcanal, within

a couple of miles or less of Guadalcanal and this channel. You can see in the moonlight and you could see the rocks, islands, and things.

I said, "This channel here is the only deep water that we'll see here. Do not get out of this channel or veer from these headings under any circumstances."

"OK, I won't, I won't."

I went in and laid down. It must have been ten minutes later, the boat went aground right in Jap territory at three o'clock, four o'clock in the morning. It was dark. We knew the Japanese were right over there. The tide went out and left the boat high and dry. Well, we jumped off the boat. In the meantime, we had radioed in for help to the base. They were going to send a tug out or some other PT boats to get us off at the next high tide, which was probably twelve hours later. We're sitting here on this coral and hiding from the Japs on the other side of the boat. God knows what they have over there. Luckily, they came out and got us. The next high tide they got us off and towed us back to the base. We got repaired and back in commission again several days later. Those types of officers were just not really prepared. They can't learn like people who have been aboard ships before.

Well, in your case, by this point you had six years in the Navy.

I joined the Navy in May of 1937. We got to Guadalcanal in October of 1942. I leave Guadalcanal at the end of February, or middle of February, 1943. So I've got five years, possibly.

Your Annapolis officers are the ones you were used to, with four years in Annapolis plus, probably, as many years service as you had.

Yes, but not as much service. My particular first officer [that I] had on PT 22 had served two years on the *Saratoga* before he came to PT boats, so he was well trained. He was a jg by then. Well he was a major, jg. I still know him, Ben Norigen. The squadron commander was an Annapolis guy and several of the others were. They were lieutenants and they were experienced officers.

At the end of your experience on Guadalcanal, from there . . .

Well, we went up to New Caledonia again on a ship from New Zealand to rejoin the PT boats up in the Solomons. About the time that I got to Guadalcanal, I ran into a friend of mine who used to be on that destroyer with me. He was a signalman when I was on there. By that time he's a chief petty officer. I run into him in Nouméa and unbeknown to me, at the same time the squadron was being released. We went over and had a few drinks and talked.

He said, "You really want to go back up there?"

I said, "No, Harper, I'll do anything in the world not to have to go back up there. I was so scared up there. If I go back up there I don't know how long I want to be alive. I have spent all this time since the war started until now overseas and I don't want to go back into combat at this particular time. I don't think I'm fit for it."

He went over to the captain he worked for, who worked for Admiral Halsey, and they transferred me to Nouméa and New Caledonia, to the port director's office. I went over to meet the captain. I went in and talked to him and he said, "You know Bagby, I can sure use a quartermaster here to set up a chart office, a hydrographic chart office, for all the ships that are coming through here that

need charts. They could be issued charts and brought up to date on all these waters out here. You think you can do something like that?"

I said, "I can take it. Been doing it for four years, when I was on a destroyer."

So by God they built me a Quonset hut type deal right by the port director's office. I established a real fine place where the people in the Pacific that needed maps, charts, anything to do with navigation, they could come in there and draw my stuff out.

In the meantime, I made chief in May of 1943 at Nouméa. I still had the office there, and one day the skipper called me up. I was the chief quartermaster and he says, "How would you like to go to Sydney?"

I said, "Captain, I'd like to go to Sydney. I haven't been anywhere but New Zealand."

"Well, we need a navigator for the *USS Prometheus*. It's been out here attending to destroyers ever since we arrived. It's been anchored until the barnacles are clear up to the bottom of the ship. They have one chief that's fairly good, but the navigator is an old time Navy Academy guy who is not proficient in navigation. The skipper is a mustang boatswain made officer who made his way up to captain, someday. They need a navigator to go with them to take the ship on R&R to Sydney for ten days."

I said, "Sure, I'd love to go."

So I got put on that ship and it took us about four or five days to get to Sydney. I got acquainted with the captain and the officers, and of course the navigator and the other chief that was on there. They were all recalled people and they were not up to date on the latest navigation systems and books and stuff that we were using at that time. I got the ship to Sydney all right. On the way down there the captain—he was a tough old guy—said, "I'm going to have to have you available when we're in port, in case we have to move or something.

We're due to go in [docking] for a few days. I don't know how much liberty I'm going to be able to give you."

"I came aboard here to do my job." I said, "I'm here to serve as your navigator as long as you need me and I guess if that's the way it's got to be then that's the way it's go to be."

We got into port and got tied up. That morning, before I went ashore he says, "Lee Bagby, I want to tell you, all I want from you is, I want you to go ashore and you can stay ashore as long as the ship is in port. As soon as you get established over there and get a hotel room or whatever you're going to get, you can spend your whole time that we're in port ashore, just consider that uncounted leave."

He had kidded me a little.

He treated me very nice. I did stay at a hotel. I had ten days of great fun in the sun. Then we took the ship back to Nouméa again and I went back to work in a hydrographic office.

I made chief in May of 1943. I stayed at Nouméa and made ensign. I didn't ever put in for a commission. I didn't know I was getting one. I got commissioned ensign in September of 1943. I didn't even hear about it until the first of the year.

One night the pay office called me up. We had built our own chief's quarters out there. We had a beautiful chief's quarters. Two of these army tents that had the wooden bottoms around them, we put together and put a kitchen in between. The captain was, of course, port director, and he got us everything we needed, like a refrigerator to store our beer in. We really had it made out there.

They had moved the chief's quarters out to where the hospital was. Four of us chiefs that worked directly for the port director, we didn't want to move out there. It was a big encampment and we didn't want to move. We

asked the skipper if we could establish our own chief's quarters for the four of us. So we did. We built these two tents and through . . .

Then I got this wild idea. "OK, this chief's quarters over here, they've had all these chiefs living there and they're issued one hundred cases of beer a month. Where is that beer going now that they've been moved?" I said, "Uh, huh . . . I'll go down and see."

I went down there. I had drawn the beer for the chief's quarters because I was a junior chief at the time. I went in there and I kept drawing the beer, a hundred cases a month. Everybody that came ashore got two bottles of beer a day. So, through our hundred cases of beer, all our friends on the fleet, all these supply ships, and Captain Gray, we fixed ourselves some real ultra chief quarters. They put in telephones for us, they put in plumbing for us, they gave us a . . .

And the beer became money for you. It became trading . . .

That became the common material that you could trade.

Plywood was frozen, absolutely frozen on the island. You couldn't draw any plywood. We thought it would be nice to make furniture and stuff out of plywood and put a deck down. We didn't have carpet but we could put canvas on the deck and then have nice quarters. We took one of the two tents and made a bunkroom out of it for the four of us. The other tent was our living quarters, with a kitchen in between. They gave us one of these big two door refrigerators, which conveniently held a lot of our beer at all times. So we lived pretty high on the hog.

But one night I was up there, this is about the first of the year in 1944, the phone rings in the chief's quarters and it's the pay office. They said, "Congratulations Bagby."

I said, "Well, what do you mean?"

"You've been a lieutenant, jg, since last September."

"What are you talking about? I'm a chief quartermaster," I said.

"No, there's an order that says that you made lieutenant, jg. It was effective September of 1943."

I said, "It can't be, but I'll take it up with my skipper in the morning."

He said, "Well, your number is 3758402, isn't it?"

I said, "That's my service number."

"Oh, you didn't make jg, you made ensign. You were first on the ensign list because your name is Bagby. There's a couple of lieutenants above you."

So then I went up to the captain and told him I wanted to stay a chief. He wouldn't have any part of that. "You're going to go down and get your uniforms changed. You're going to go down and draw all this back pay you got coming, all your uniform allowances and everything you've got coming. You're going to become an officer."

I said, "Captain, I don't want to be an officer. I want to be a chief. A chief's as high as I want to go."

He said, "No, I'm ordering you to go down and do it."

He had his officer bring the message in [about the commission]. Sure enough it was there. And so, by God, I went down there. He said, "Now, your first assignment tonight, Ensign Bagby, is to get your money, and you're going to take myself and my whole staff down to the officer's club for drinks and dinner."

"Captain, I've never been in an officer's club in all of my life. I wouldn't know how to act. I've never hung around with officers except on ships."

"Well, you're moving out of the chief quarters. You're moving into this Quonset

up with these officers. And you're taking us to dinner."

And I had to do that. By God, you know what happened after that? They brought two PT boats down from Guadalcanal. They needed a pilot boat to one of the places. They had to pilot ships that were across the other side of the island; it was sixty miles out. They put either the Navy pilots on board or the French pilots to bring the ships in. In Nouméa, they had two entrances. They had one that was to one side of the island, and you had to come through the reefs to get in here. The other one was a place called Goro, about sixty miles from where we were based. The skipper called me and said, "You were on PT boats weren't you?"

I said, "Yes, sure as heck was. You know that."

"Admiral Halsey's bringing down two PT boats, PT 25 and PT 26. I want you to take both of those boats. Take the one that you think is the best. I want you to go over to the pool, and I want you to find yourself some PT people. You are going to be skipper of whichever of those boats you decide to fix up. And that's effective immediately. The boats are already here."

So I went down, examined the boats, and they both were in pretty bad repair. They had been down in Ellice Island and in there. I went over to the motor pool where they kept the personnel and went through all of them. I found a chief I knew who was being transferred somewhere, a guy by the name of Sykes. I had met him when I first went to PT boats. He wasn't on a PT boat but he was an engine repairman. I got him and I told him the problem.

"Chief, we got to get a crew and we're going to put this boat in commission. I'm to be the skipper of it, and you're going to be the chief." I said, "I think we had a crew of

about seven or eight, of different kinds. We need machinist mates and we're going to need radiomen." I had myself, and Hugh. "We don't need gunner's mates or torpedo men." And so we filled out the boat and made a crew out of it. I was on that boat until May of 1944.

In May of 1944, I started hanging around with Navy pilots and Marine pilots. I found out that they made more money than we did, because they got flight pay. They had more connection with the nurses and the women over there than we did, and I kind of liked that. So I put in for flight training in 1944.

Talk about the role of the PT boat.

The role of the PT boat is as a pilot boat. A lot of Japanese subs were operating in the area of New Caledonia. Both entrances to the harbor were vulnerable to being attacked by Japanese submarines. There had been several ships sunk on their way in to Nouméa. Nouméa was the big place for all the ships, all the war ships and everything, operating in the South Pacific at that time. They wanted a boat that was fast enough, and in the first place, one that goes clear out to Goro, which shortens their trip. They could come right in and be inside the reefs out of danger instead of having to sail all around New Caledonia and come in the other entrance, which was on the other side of the island. Or they could come in the other side of the island.

The PT boat could meet the ships at sea and they never had to slow down. I would meet the ship, say, eight or ten miles at sea with either a Navy pilot—we had Navy chiefs and warrant officers and officers who were harbor pilots who knew the harbor there—or we also had the regular French harbor pilots. New Caledonia was a French island. It was under command of the French people at the time. The ships could be at twenty-five

knots, twenty-eight knots, seventeen knots, or ten knots. I would just bring the PT boat alongside of them, slip right in, make the same speed as they were making, get inside the wake, and pull right up to a Jacob's ladder alongside the carrier, or the cruiser, or the merchant ship, or the liner, or whatever it was. Our Navy pilot could just walk right up the Jacob's ladder and walk right aboard. I'd just put speed on the PT boat, build up to thirty-five knots or so, and just pull right away. The ship would never stop, never slow down. That way the ships never had to stop and pick up a pilot. We put the pilots aboard at whatever speed the ship was going. And the PT boat could go as fast as any ship we had ; faster.

And [we did it] the same way with taking pilots off. The harbor pilots would take the ships out beyond the sea. The ship could build up to speed and keep going. I would just catch some ship, get alongside of them, the harbor pilot would come right down the side of the Jacob's ladder, hop back on my deck, and I just fool around and go back into port. So it turned out to be a very successful venture. I did that for the last four or five months I was down there.

And then my captain, Captain Gray, who I thought very much of, got orders that they were going to get ready to invade the Admiral Islands. They were going to put a big base up at the Admiral Islands under Admiral Halsey, and probably MacArthur. I volunteered to go up there with him because I wanted to go with the guys that I knew, and I wanted to go with the captain. But he got me aside and he said, "Lee, you put in for flight training. You're most likely going to get it. This thing has come up and, I think you've done all the time that you need. Your father died last year. You never got home for that. You never even heard about it for thirty days after he had passed away. Your mother's been back there all this time by

herself. You've been out here, out of the states, three years. I think it's time you went home."

So he detached me. They got me orders back to the mainland. I still hadn't received my orders for flight training, but they ordered me back to Treasure Island in San Francisco. The captain, being the port director, says, "I've got a good deal for you. There's this Danish merchant ship that's going back to San Francisco. It [will be in port] in a few days. It's going to Suva, Fiji Islands, it's going to Pele, Tahiti and then to San Francisco. The only passengers aboard it are going to be ten naval officers. I think rather than fly that maybe you should take this ship back,"

I had orders where I could take an airplane back. So I took the merchant ship. Another buddy was detached at the same time and we took the trip back on the Danish merchant ship. What a ball we had. The ship was all Danish. We ate in the officer's mess, the captain ate with us. All the time, we were being treated well on the Danish ship.

Well, we stopped at Espiritu first. We stayed overnight in Espiritu and had a good time there. We hit Tahiti; we went in there to get some diesel oil. They hadn't seen another ship in six months. At that time, Tahiti was just like a paradise, as far as being a South Pacific island. The skipper didn't want to keep his ship in port overnight because he was afraid he would lose all his crew members, because of all the women that were on the island. The ten officers got liberty right away, but the merchant ship's crew didn't get liberty. We spent all day in Tahiti just having a wonderful time. There were probably sixty or seventy Tahitian girls on the dock waiting for us and doing dances and all this when we went ashore. We wanted to stay so bad for the night, but we came back to the ship at six o'clock as planned. Then the skipper let us go back ashore until nine o'clock because

they hadn't finished dumping their fuel yet. So we went ashore again and came back and got underway for San Francisco about nine or ten at night. We got into San Francisco after about twenty-one days of being at sea.

I waited for orders in San Francisco. I waited around about ten, fifteen days and nobody could seem to find my orders. I lived in Red Bluff, California, which was about two hundred miles north of San Francisco. "Why can't I go home and be with my family and wait orders there, instead of being in San Francisco spending my money as fast as I possibly can?" They agreed to let me go home. I proceeded home and awaited orders.

Finally after about a couple of weeks, the phone rang and I had a set of orders to Navy primary flight training at Dallas, Texas, to train as a naval aviator. In the meantime in Red Bluff, I had met my present wife. I met her on May 18. My sister-in-law brought her into the house. I was taking a nap in the afternoon. We dated from then on, everyday. I told her that if I got orders to flight training, I'd propose to her. I told her that, contingent upon the fact of me getting orders to flight training, would she marry me. And she agreed to marry me. My orders to flight training came through, and we got married on June 18, one month exactly from the day I met her. It's been fifty-one plus years now that we've been married, since.

But anyway, I went through primary flight training at Dallas. I went to basic flight training at Corpus Christi, Texas, and I went to Pensacola for the rest of my basic flight training. I got my wings in Pensacola. The war was ending so they put us through several different training programs. The need for naval aviators was not as much as they anticipated, as the war was ending. I got my wings in December of 1946 and went to Miami River, Florida, Naval Air

Station where I trained in torpedo bombers and Avengers. Incidentally, the war had ended while I was in Dallas. I'm still in Dallas, Texas, when the war ended.

How did you feel when you heard about Hiroshima?

I don't think we knew much about Hiroshima until they filed in and told us the war was over. "The gates are open. You people are free to go on liberty for as long as you wish. When you get enough liberty, please come back and we will know what we're going to do with all the people we have in flight training."

So, after three days ashore in Dallas, in which I must have kissed half of all the Dallas girls there was in town Dallas threw a big street dance between the Adolphus and the Baker Hotels and we had a grand time. That was the end of the war as far as I was concerned.

I finished flight training in 1946. I went to the west coast and became a carrier pilot aboard air craft carriers, on and off for the next fifteen years or so. I finished out the rest of my Navy career alternating between carriers and destroyers and overseas. I finally ended up with thirty-three years.

Did you consider getting out after the end of the war?

No, I actually extended my first enlistment to get those PT boats. And I actually cried when I left the destroyer because I loved that ship so much. I had been on board almost four years and it was home. Sometimes I would spend three months aboard ship. We'd be mid-port and I would spend three months at that. Going ashore, I managed to keep busy by learning and doing the things I had to do.

And, all in all, my four years on the destroyer gave me enough education, working with all of them Naval Academy officers, that I learned enough to be a very good officer.

And you . . .

I finally obtained the rank of Commander and retired as a Commander.

You stayed through three wars. You were there for Korea.

I was in Korea. I was stationed aboard an aircraft carrier for two deployments of seven months each off of Korea and went through that whole thing. Then I was in during the Vietnam War. I finished carrier flying aboard the *U.S.S. Ranger* in 1961. I went from there to Lake Mead Base in Las Vegas, Nevada, where I was operations officer and executive officer in the nuclear weapons storage and repair site for three years.

You ended up staying in Nevada because you had done a couple of tours here and you liked this area?

I stayed in Nevada because of my first tour in Las Vegas, which was very good to me. We were treated nice. The duty was fine. I liked the people. I loved to hunt and fish. My daughter graduated from high school there.

By this time I had a young boy. We went from Las Vegas to Sicily for almost two years. I came back to Norfolk, Virginia where I was on an admiral's staff for three years. I had thirty years in but for pay purposes I couldn't retire then. But my friend and good buddy was skipper of Fallon and asked me to come there. So I did an extra three years of duty and I'm glad we did it. I did thirty-three years in

the service. We moved to Carson City and I wouldn't live anyplace else. We're very, very happy over here.

When you look back at the war, how important was it to the country and to the world? Did we need to do it?

World War II, yes; there was nothing we could do but get into it. We were actually involved in it, but not openly, for at least a year before. When Hitler invaded Poland and the British went into the war we actually were drug into the war, I believe, by our relations with Britain.

Through our North Atlantic supply . . .

We used our ships to trail German subs. We used our ships to escort convoys until we got into British territory or far enough over that they would relieve us. World War II was a valid war. It was a war I don't think we could have stayed out of, because we actually laid the ultimatum for World War II when we put the embargo on oil against Japan. That was the final thing against Japan that actually caused them to attack Pearl Harbor.

Are you proud of the way that America fought?

I am very proud of what we did in World War II. World War II was a long war and both the military and the civilian people really worked hard to get us into a position to win that war. When we went into that war we were in no position to move. We were a very, very, small Navy, and a very small force at that time. We had been building up, and thanks to Franklin Roosevelt, we had been building new ships. We had lots of new ships under construction.

Did the challenges of war make us a better country? We know it cost a lot but did it give to us, too?

I can't say that but . . .

Some of the men in your generation think that their generation stood up to the plate more than lots of others and that the test made them better people.

Everybody got behind World War II, from civilians to all the armed forces, and we built up into a tremendous force which allowed us to win the war. But Korea and Vietnam were too different. Those two wars, even though I was loyal and dedicated and did my part in both of them, were not wars that we set out to win. We didn't set out win those wars. Those wars, actually, were fought from Washington. I can remember being on carriers and having launching flights going out where they would be told how many bombs they could carry. We wouldn't even load maximum bombs. This was somewhat in the Korean War, more so in the Vietnam War. The orders for the strikes would come out of Washington. President Johnson and all of them controlled the strikes. We were not allowed to hit the places we wanted to hit and where we knew we were supposed to hit.

Did that seem bizarre, after presidents like Roosevelt and Truman, to get to somebody who wanted to sit up at nights with maps and decide where the next bombing raid is?

It was a very, very, bitter, bitter victory for myself and people that served in those wars; especially the people from Vietnam. I can understand completely the feelings of some of those people. I don't blame them at all for trying to stay out of that war. I actively didn't fight in Vietnam, but I was in the military all

during that period and I did my part behind the lines and everything. It was a war we shouldn't have been into. MacArthur had the right idea. In Korea, we should have been allowed to go ahead and finish the war; either that or withdraw, one of the two.

When I was aboard the *U.S.S. Boxer* in 1950, we were in Inchon and Soul, Korea, for three days about April 15, 1950, just before we went into war in June. The officers were entertained by the king and his wife at the palace. And the enlisted men were entertained, probably, too. We were also entertained by the embassy people. We had the president and his wife aboard ship for one day, served them honors and had the rails manned and all this with them. The war was very intimate at that time. The people there knew that it was just a matter of time until war was to break out. We were there, that close [to the start of the war].

We came home on the *Boxer* and arrived back in the United States. We were relieved in Guam by the *Valley Forge* and her air groups. Just about the time we got back to the States, the Korean War broke out. The *Valley Forge* was the first carrier to launch strikes against Korea. We got back and we dismissed all the fly midshipmen, the reserve officers, and we had already begun to get rid of our people. We had already let our people that we were going to let out, get out. Immediately, they declared war. We were at Alameda and we had to stop our people from being discharged and bring them back in to keep our ship manned. The *Boxer* went right back over again—I wasn't with them—and they took a whole load of P-51s with these air force pilots over to Korea. They just ferried them over and dumped them off and then they came back to the States afterwards. But we were in Korea in April, just before the Korean War, that's how close we came to getting into it at that particular time.

FRANK N. BENDER

Frank N. Bender: My name is Frank Norcross Bender and I was born in Reno October 5, 1920, at St. Mary's Hospital. The reason I was born in Reno was that my mother and dad were at that time living in Orange Cove, California Dad was a banker. Mom wanted me to be a Nevadan because both Mom and Dad were born in Reno and her father, Frank Norcross, whom I'm named after, was a member of the first graduating class at the University of Nevada. So both Mom and Dad attended the University of Nevada and she wanted me to be a Nevadan so that's how I happened to be born here.

Ken Adams: They were both born here?

Yes. My grandfather Norcross was born a year after Reno became a city, where Peckham Lane is. My other grandfather, Bender, came across the plains when he was thirteen in 1863, and landed in Virginia City. When he was twenty-one years old, he won five thousand dollars in the lottery. He and his brother, who was then working for the

state in Carson City, decided to start a bank. Well, it wasn't actually starting a bank at the time, but with the five thousand dollars they would cash checks for the Chinese railroad workers because they were paid by checks. Central Pacific had found that if they paid [the Chinese railroad workers] by checks there were very few that could get them cashed. These poor guys, I don't know how they survived; but [grandfather Bender] set up a little board on a couple of nail kegs and the Chinese workers would come and cash their checks. He then sent the money—or sent the checks—by Wells Fargo to Sacramento and they'd bring the cash back, and it just kept parlaying

Did he charge a percentage for cashing the checks?

He charged a dollar a bank check, so it was pretty high. I don't know how much the checks were, but when you consider the cost of having to then send them by Wells Fargo (in those days it was all horse drawn) he had



FRANK N. BENDER, USNR, 1943-46

pretty good expenses in that. But it evolved into the Bender Brothers Bank on Virginia Street right downtown. Then later it became the First National Bank of Nevada. And then they decided they didn't want to be a National Bank and they changed the name to the Washoe County Bank. They built a building on the corner of Second and Virginia, the southwest corner. The cupola on top of the building is still there; it's the original building that they built.

Well, my dad grew up in the banking business, obviously, and became a banker. He got his first job in Orange Cove, which is about thirty miles east of Fresno. I was taken there after I was a month old, and that's where I grew up for the first five years of my life. Then he got a job in Berkeley with

the then Bank of Italy as a cashier. I grew up the rest of my schooling days in Berkeley, California, going through grammar school, high school, and junior high. Because all my friends were going to [the University of California], I went to Cal too, and I've always been sorry that I didn't come here [the University of Nevada].

What year did you graduate from high school?

Nineteen thirty-eight. I then was in the Cal class of 1943. Leading into the war, our neighbor in Berkeley was a captain in the Navy and he was in charge of the naval ROTC at Cal. My dad was a naval officer so I wanted to be a naval officer. I applied for the ROTC and you had to take a physical. They found a heart murmur, and they wouldn't accept me. I don't know whether it was one or two years later, but Pearl Harbor came along and I again tried to get into the Navy and they couldn't hear the heart murmur. So I was accepted.

Their hearing got worse. [laughter]

Yes, it really did. [laughter] They were taking anybody that walked in the door, I think. So they put me in what was called the V-7 program. The V-7 program had colleges at Columbia University and Northwestern; I can't remember if there was a third one or not. But anyway, I was stationed at Columbia. The first three weeks you were an apprentice seaman. That's when you had to wear the thirteen button pants and the sailor uniform and the white cap. During that time we were limited to only three blocks around Columbia, we couldn't go any farther than that. We had to buy all our supplies from the local merchants, who were making a killing because a ten cent protractor was being charged seventy-five cents. And oh, it made me mad . . .

You couldn't go anywhere?

Really.

Look, before we get into that, when you went off to go to college, were you going off to be a banker? What were you going to study and what were your . . . ?

My grandfather Norcross was federal judge in Reno for eighteen years and I wanted to be a lawyer. I had full intentions of becoming a lawyer at that time. I'll tell you later why I never became a lawyer, but that's what I started out to do at Cal.

By 1939, 1940, maybe you could see the end of the Depression; but what kind of a world did you see as a college student eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old? What kind of a world did you see? Did you see a war coming?

No. I was certainly concerned about what was going on in England at that time. Part of my life, of course, was growing up during the Depression. When I was in fifth grade, I guess the bottom dropped out of the stock market, and the Depression started. My dad simply couldn't afford to keep Mom and I here in Berkeley, so we came home and lived with my grandparents for a year. By that time [my Dad] had got his feet back together.

The Bender Brothers Bank, Washoe County Bank, how did that fair with the Depression?

It didn't.

It didn't?

Mr. George Wingfield got involved, I think, in Washoe County Bank and somehow or another it just didn't make it.

George did, but your bank didn't?

Yes. [laughter] My grandfather was a charter director of what was then Union Federal Savings, which is now American Federal Savings, and that one has survived all these years.

So your grandparents were OK financially through the Depression?

Oh yes. Grandfather Norcross was making about twenty-five thousand a year at that time and that was a lot of money.

As a federal judge. He was a judge?

Yes. He did well, so we ate regularly. I can remember panhandlers coming to the door. We'd be having dinner and a knock would come at the door, and he'd go to it, and there [would] be a panhandler there, and he'd reach in his pocket and whatever change he had he gave it to them. Oh, and growing up, one other thing that I did was I got to know Jack Dempsey, who lived across the street from us—not very well, but I was a young boy.

That was in California?

In Reno.

Oh, in Reno?

Yes. Elmer Vacchina and his brother Aldo were born in Reno. Their parents were Italian (I don't know if they came from Italy or if they were born in Reno). They owned the Californian Apartments. And my grandparents, at the time, were living in those apartments. That's where I was brought when I was born. And Elmer Vacchina [and I] were a week apart or very close together as far as

age. So we've known each other for almost seventy-five years.

And after that year, which was your fifth or sixth grade year, you went back to . . .

To Berkeley.

Yes. The Depression had been certainly, not easy, but . . .

No, the Depression was tough. In 1935 my dad started a restaurant on Telegraph Avenue, which was just a block from Sather Gate, which is the main entrance to the University of California. He was in a college town and by luck he hired a cook that had worked for a chain of hamburger stores called the White Spot, in Los Angeles. They had a secret sauce and this chef knew the recipe, and he gave it to my dad and taught him how to make hamburgers. From 1935 to 1939, just four years, we were so successful that he had nine restaurants.

Wow.

One of them in Sacramento and one on Treasure Island. And so I literally grew up in the restaurant business. Started out at fifteen cents an hour washing dishes in the basement. [laughter]

When you went to college, you expected to come back and be more like your grandfather, be a lawyer . . .

I didn't like the restaurant business. I just didn't. I grew up in it and I learned an awful lot in it because I became a jack of all trades. I had to do everything. I worked [in my family's restaurant] in 1939. I was nineteen years old. By then I was almost an adult and I helped

manage the place. Then I worked as a barker in a uniform out in one of the midways, they call it, where all the rides were, bringing people in. I remember it got very cold in San Francisco in the fall. My dad somehow learned about scones, when scones was a Scottish biscuit. You put butter on them and raspberry jam and we'd cook them. They'd be about this big around; then we'd quarter them. And I think we got ten cents apiece for them. We sold so many of those things it was just unbelievable.

That's huge. That's about a nine inch diameter.

Just about nine inches in diameter. Right.

So now you're off to naval training.

Well, the last thing I might say about my activities at Cal, was I belonged to Chi Phi fraternity and I made the Cal ski team. Of course our biggest competitor was the University of Nevada. We became west coast champions for two years of the four I was on the team. The rest of the time was Nevada, so it was a big rivalry. I even made it as a Cal team player into the . . . I think it was the 1939 or 1940 University of Nevada *Artemisia*. I was pictured dancing at the Tri Delta sorority house.

[laughter]

I've always said, "Well, I at least got into the *Artemisia* if I didn't make it to the university."

Did you graduate from Cal?

Yes.

Before you went into the Navy?

That was the joy of the V-7 program. They wanted officers with a degree that were graduates of a university. Part of the deal, we had to take trigonometry and we had to take astronomy and well, various things that were naval oriented. I got through those courses and we had repeats of some of them at Columbia. And I was stationed . . . I actually went to summer school so that I could get in the Navy, get out of Cal early. I graduated in February of 1943 rather than in June. Lord knows how my life would have changed if I had waited those months. When I got to Columbia I was stationed in Fernell Hall. If you've read *The Caine Mutiny*, it starts in Fernell Hall [with] an apprentice seaman just like I was. So it's a very interesting book to me.

While we were at Columbia, we were there from February through . . . I forget when. We had to take all the various naval things—we'd march, we'd get trips. I remember going up the Hudson River. We had to be able to navigate a destroyer or whatever it was that we were on. It wasn't a destroyer, that would be too big, but it was that type of a ship [only] smaller.

After we graduated, we were sent to Little Creek, Virginia, and there we got our training in small boats which were amphibious boats. The Army would send their similar type officers and men. They'd load them aboard our boats and then we'd cross the Chesapeake Bay. I can remember going across one night. Before you made the invasion, all the boats would get together and they'd circle. The diesel fumes were sort of gathering in the center, and I got so sick. One of my sailors had a bottle of rye and he said, "Here, this will fix you up." And I took a swig of that, [it] went down, and everything came right back up. [laughter] We'd go over and land in Maryland and let the troops off and we'd come back across the Chesapeake Bay to Little Creek.

At any point did they do the kind of traditional training that people think of? Where you go in and they shave your head and they take your clothes and they take your identity, and then they build you back up? This basic training kind of thing . . .

Where they make you one of us? When I did that I was already an officer; midshipman school was strictly college.

Yes?

I mean it was all courses you had to take. You had to take signaling. I almost flunked out of the Navy at Columbia because I was having a hard time making fifteen words a minute in Morse code. The dot and dashes were getting to me. But I did make it through.

Your initial training was almost like graduate school?

Yes.

You just continued on?

Exactly.

They gave you something to wear, different clothes, but you really were just a college student at a different college?

That's right. As an officer you're God to the people below you. I had a fun experience. In order to get home I had to take the train from New York to Chicago. I stayed overnight in Chicago because I wanted to go up to Northwestern; a couple of my college friends, also in V-7, were there. I found out where they were located, and I walked into their room unannounced. Whoever saw you first had to stand up and shout attention: "Attend hut!"

They all had to stand with their shoulders back and they were all . . . Then one of them finally recognized who I was [laughter] and he...it was really a kick. We had a lot of laughs over that.

Somewhere they taught you what being in the Navy was like.

That was Little Creek, Virginia, where we got indoctrinated into the small boats. Small boats were relatively new to the Navy. They were using them, obviously, in the South Pacific and they had them in Africa. Had to use them. They knew what they were doing. They put in charge of us a chief petty officer cum lieutenant. I mean, they made him a lieutenant from chief petty officer because he had maybe twenty years in the Navy and he was a tough old bastard, as we'd call him. He was a real tough guy who had no use for officers that didn't go to Annapolis. If you had been an Annapolis graduate, you were treated differently. We were just a bunch of college kids that he could care less about. He put us through the ropes and he was interesting.

How did that feel to you?

Well, we knew we had to train. I can't go back in my memory that far. All I can remember is that I didn't like living in the barracks. One guy kept the lights on all the time. And finally, at ten o'clock, it was lights out. We were real tired and I wanted to go to sleep. I had a hard time sleeping with the light looking in my eye. He wanted to read. I mean, those were little incidents. Why you remember them, I don't know.

Bender is an English name; it's a German name; it's a Jewish name; it's a relatively universal name in Europe from different countries and cultures. We were Episcopalian so I didn't even know that Bender was a

Jewish name. One time one of my seamen, a Goldberg, he and Harry Bender came to see me to take off on Yom Kippur. I didn't even know what they were talking about. When they explained it to me, well then I gave them the leave.

Oh, that's another thing. As a westerner, when I went to Columbia I did not know the Civil War was still being fought. Believe me, it was being fought. In the barracks at night in Fernell Hall the southerners and the northerners would gather and fight the Civil War. One of my relatives was General William Tecumseh Sherman, and Richard Sherman had signed the Declaration of Independence. Old William Tecumseh, of course, was an anathema to the southerners. I announced one night, sort of innocently, but to get their goat, that I was related to him and the silence was just unbelievable. They didn't speak to me for quite some time, the southerners. [laughter] But that's something I don't think the western kids realize, and I think it's probably good to an extent. The Ivy League colleges probably have those kind of debates going on and on.

Well, we got to Little Creek, Virginia, and there we learned the ins and outs of running small boats. We were there for about three months and then they moved us to Fort Pierce, Florida. They didn't know whether we were going to go to Europe or to the Pacific. Florida, being similar to the Pacific with the beaches—they wanted us to have that kind of training. We were there for another three months. We'd have afternoons off. We'd go down and get a chocolate milk shake and a hamburger. I weighed 165 at Cal and all of a sudden I was 190 pounds and I thought, "Wow, something's wrong. I've got to stop this." I did get back down.

It wasn't all muscle. It was too much good food.

The Florida people were very, very nice to us. We didn't have too much to do at Little Creek. Norfolk, Virginia, we thought, was the worst town in the world. It was just a very, very dirty city. Virginia Beach was maybe an hour's drive away and we often just hitchhiked. We'd get there and there were things to do. Girls. It was a fun place but you didn't get there very often. Florida was sort of similar. We could hitchhike to Palm Beach. Every week there was a dance put on by the mothers of some society; I can't remember what it was. Or they would have us to dinner at various houses. They really treated us wonderfully. I remember one was an all night party. The next morning we hadn't eaten and the only thing that we could find were some coconuts. We sat on a curb and banged them until we got them open. And that was an experience.

Lots of girls and lots of stuff to do?

Yes, like college, but nothing permanent.

Were you apprehensive about war?

You knew at some point and time you were going to go.

From Fort Pierce I got my orders to go to Long Island. I arrived in the middle of January . . . in the first part of January . . . [going] from eighty or ninety degree weather to almost below zero. It was just colder than hell.

That was your first permanent duty assignment? Up to this point you had just been in training?

No. We were only in Long Island for maybe two weeks, preparing to go to England. It was somewhat like a week or two leave. We could go into New York City and play around and whatnot.

During the Columbia days, after we were allowed to go to New York City, then it was very interesting because I had never been there. For the first time in my life I tasted raw oysters and I thought they were very good.

When we got to Long Island we were assigned to the *Queen Mary* to be taken across the Atlantic. Because of the weather, I had developed a very high temperature and they put me in sick bay.

There's one thing I wanted to say before we leave Long Island. I was running short of cash, so I went to the Western Union office and sent a wire to my folks to wire me some money. A very cute blonde said, "I'm from Reno," and she took my message. She was married to a man by the name of Cliff Malone, who was a sailor. I didn't know Cliff at the time and I certainly didn't know her, but she was just so cute. Dottie? I can't remember the first name. But . . . the money came and I spent it.

We were on our way to England. It took four or five days to cross the Atlantic to get to Scotland. All those days I was stationed in sick bay . . . or I was bunked, not stationed. I got over [my temperature] and I got all right. Before they took me to sick bay they put me in a room that was a state room for two people. They had eighteen of us in it. (The *Queen Mary* is down in Long Beach. I think it's still there. Part of it is just the way it was when I went over. It was quite interesting to see it years later.) We landed in Scotland in the Firth of Clyde. All these women came on board to clean up the ship. I don't think any of them were over four feet tall. Talk about little people. [laughter] They were just as nice as could be. It was hard to understand them even though you're speaking the same language.

Scottish midgets, huh? [laughter]

Yes. They put us on a train right away. For twelve hours we were on that train until we reached Bidford. Bidford was up the north coast of Devon, in southwest England. The reason they had chosen Bidford was that the seventeen foot tides matched the seventeen foot tides that we would be landing on in France. They had to train us in how to get on and get off that.

That's where I got my first assignment of boats. I was an ensign. My first command was three LCMs. The LCMs were primarily to take a tank and land it on the beach, rather than troops. But they did use them for troops. It was bigger than the LCVP which was a smaller boat that just took troops. Most of the pictures that you see of the landing on the beaches were of the smaller variety [LCVP] with the troops. Ours would come later with the tanks and whatnot. Then LCTs, bigger ones, disgorged the trucks and all the rest of the things that were going to count as part of the invasion. They first had to secure the beach to make sure that the other bigger ships could get in.

Did you have any anxiety about being able to command? By now you realize that this isn't a joke, that you guys would be going into a real war now.

I think we all went in with the idea that we were going to make it. Our cause was right. As we were building up we could see the magnitude of what was happening. We felt that this time it wasn't going to be Dunkirk in reverse. It was going to be a big one. I think we all hated Hitler so much that we wanted to get this thing over with. We feared, of course, because we knew some of us wouldn't come back; but that's the chances you take when you go to war. You're going to do your duty. In contrast [to] the Vietnam War where there were so many protesters. (I had one friend

that became a protester of World War II that I had grown up with. He's now a monk in some religious order in northern California.) Those of us that were there, very few of us didn't feel that we shouldn't be there. We thought this had gone far enough and that we had to stop Mr. Hitler.

When you say that you felt hate for Hitler, does that translate into anger to fight? Did you feel anger towards somebody?

Fortunately, I only got shot at once, and it was when I was on the beach. We went through a lot of air raids in England while we were waiting to go to France and it wasn't a fun thing. It was scary. You knew that at any moment a bomb could drop on you. After our training in Bidford we were then sent to Teignmouth, on the English Channel. We were more prone to see the air raids and we would often have to go to some sort of a shelter. I'm a Rotarian and I saw my first Rotary meeting in Teignmouth and I didn't know what it was. I had this curious desire to find out, but I never could, because you had to be invited, obviously, and it was local people that were going. Someday in my life before I pass on, I'd like to go back to Teignmouth and go to their Rotary meeting. But, that's sort of a light side.

Teignmouth was a very small town. It was on an estuary so that our boats could be there, and we'd go out into the channel and train. There we learned to shoot a .50 caliber machine gun, which we hadn't done before. I remember one time that brought the war real close. The Germans had sunk some kind of a vessel with troops on board and there were twenty or thirty or forty bodies floating. We stopped and grabbed the dog tags off the bodies. We couldn't pick them up, but we got a few dog tags that we turned in. At least they

got the message to the folks that they were gone. That was the first real blow to us that, “Hey, these are Americans and they’re dead.” It was very . . . I can’t think of the proper word, but it wasn’t a pleasant experience, obviously.

You wrote a lot of letters all through your college and military experience. Did you write about things like that in your letters? Did you write about how those things felt?

If I did I didn’t know. A single guy, I wrote more of the happy things, the trips I took or the girls I met. I remember in one of the letters writing about the Stage Door Canteen in New York and what a dump it was. I wasn’t impressed at all, [laughter] and yet it was a very, very famous place. There I met a French sailor and a Canadian, I think. During that time of crisis, you make friends pretty fast because you needed them.

While we were in training in England I remember having to teach my crew that, “Hey, we’re in a foreign country.” We were in the countryside and we were taking a hike one day and we went through sort of a farmyard. One of the sailors came out with an egg. I made him take it back and put it back because I knew that eggs were rationed. I had to set them straight that, “Hey, you got to behave while you’re over here.” You have those kind of experiences, and I don’t think I wrote home about them.

The thing that occurs to me always in thinking about writing letters is you’re in another world. By the time you get to the [English] Channel in your training, you’re now just a couple of months away from the invasion. You were living with just men, although there are women around in the English countryside; you’re being bombed and there isn’t anything to tell your

parents that fit into Berkeley, California. It’s a different world.

One of these first letters that went from Teignmouth . . . We went up to Poole. Poole and Weymouth were very close, like sister cities Reno and Sparks. We were stationed on an English naval base. In the mornings the WRENs, which were the lady sailors for the English Navy (I forget what WREN stands for but it’s obviously Royal Navy and the women in the Royal Navy or something) would wake us up in the morning and serve us tea. Well, Americans, even an American naval officer, never had that. That was quite an experience. And of course I wrote home and told about that. After about a week—we were only there a couple of weeks before we finally sailed off—the WRENs weren’t allowed to come and wake us up anymore. That was really a blow. Our Negro mess stewards took their place. Someone had to wake us up to get us up all at the same time.

One of the things that we had to get used to were the blackouts at night time. We had to be very careful driving and whatever.

It was while I was in Poole that we went to a town called Bournemouth, a resort community. And how I got to Bournemouth was they had a Red Cross club there, American Red Cross club. It was just absolutely beautiful. It was a major hotel type of thing. One night I walked in, and there was a brother and a sister and their cousin that I had gone to college with. The sister was in the Red Cross, the brother was a foot soldier, and the cousin was a P-38 pilot. I had gone through high school and college with these kids and it was just a big reunion and how great it was. I had a bottle of bourbon and six Cokes that I somehow had obtained. [The] next night [we] decided to meet at the place called Branksome Towers in Bournemouth. While we were having a

Coke and bourbon, this beautiful girl comes walking down. The pilot jumps up and heads her off—she was heading for the bathroom—and starts talking to her. I got up and I wanted to meet her too. He had already made a date for the next night and I said, “Oh, do you have a sister?”

And she said, “Yes,” and so I dated her sister. But it turns out that I was six years older than the sister, and in those days a six year difference between boy and girl was pretty severe. I had a great time but had no idea that [the] blond, the older one, was going to be my future wife. This is June and we were married in December. It was sort of a quick romance but I’ll get to how I got to that stage later on. We had a great time and then we parted.

The next night we were going to meet again and that’s the night we were quarantined. Nobody could leave the base. We were stuck there. We knew something was up. My buddy, Roy Edelfelt, had been with me all during the prior training. His orders were to go on D-day; to leave June fifth because it took twelve hours to cross the Channel in these boats. I was to leave the next morning. We left at five o’clock the next morning. The thing that sticks in my memory more than anything of early D-day was being woke [up] at two or three in the morning by the drones of airplanes. We knew they were ours because there were no air raid sirens. When day break finally came, then we could see them . . . we must have seen a thousand airplanes in the sky at one time. It was just so dense with planes. It was awesome. The reports were slowly coming in that things were going not well but they got us going.

My three little boats didn’t carry tanks. They put in what they called bangalore torpedoes. They were about five inches in diameter and about thirty feet long, full of explosives. They used those things to blow

up the beach barricades. Our squadron, or whatever you would call ourselves in those days, was probably twelve boats. For instance, twelve LCMs were to be escorted by [a] British PT boat. And for some reason, I don’t know who decided it, but they put us with about a dozen concrete British supply barges, for want of a better word. They could go on their own power but they were so slow that we idled on one engine and we were still going faster than they were. We got about half way across the Channel and the PT boat said, “We can’t do this; we’ve got to get you to the beach.” And so we departed [from] the concrete boats.

We got to the beach the next evening, late afternoon, and nobody had any orders to unload our stuff . . . nobody. Here we had these torpedoes that were suppose to blow up the beach barricades, but they had pretty much taken care of all the beach barricades so they weren’t in that much urgency to get them off. However, there was a huge barge, like the barges that you see on the Mississippi River, loaded with explosives of all kinds that were from the Army. Two LCIs, which were Landing Craft Infantry, brought this barge to the beach. They backed off and had us go in and hold it until the tide went out and left us there. Well, we figured that [since] the barge was full of explosives, we might as well dump our torpedoes in, and so that’s what we did.

I decided before we went and took this barge in that I would go ashore and find someone that could tell us what to do with these torpedoes. I landed on a beach and dropped my ramp down. Sitting on a little bank in front of me was a high school classmate of mine. He was a naval officer. That beach was I don’t know how many miles long and there again I met a friend.

A couple of hundred thousand men have gone through?

Yes! We saw the men single file. All these LCIs were just bringing more and more troops ashore . . . [then] single file walking up on Omaha Beach. Right at the cliffs, there was a stack of bodies. I don't know how many thousand bodies, but there were a couple of thousand men that were killed during the initial invasion. They were stacked like cord wood. It was a gruesome event. There was a tank on the beach, it was stopped, and we got underneath the tank for protection.

Did planes actually come?

It didn't strafe us. In fact, I think it was shot down before it got to us, but it was an alert.

When I finally got rid of [the torpedoes], they started having us help unload the big ships that were coming in. They had sunk all those old liberty ships to make a harbor. They were building the ramps out into the harbor so that they could bring ships alongside. But for the first week, we did the unloading of the ships, and of course that was much slower.

How did you physically do that?

We would just come alongside a ship and they would just drop stuff down into our hole and then we'd take it ashore.

And then you'd take it up to the beach, drop your ramp, and then someone would come and take it out?

Take it out, yes.

Would the Army come then to pick it up?

Yes. That didn't last too long because they got that ramp built in two or three days. And then all hell broke loose with the storm that

hit. Two of my boats were sunk just from the waves. I only had one boat. I remember that the waves had broken up these ramps that went out in the ocean. I was going somewhere on one of the smaller amphibious boats, LCPs, and we hit one of the ramps that had come up, or it was one of the beach barricades . . . I'm not sure what it was. It just ripped a hole in our boat and it started to sink. Fortunately, there was another boat very close by and he was able to take us aboard.

Life aboard the LCI was very, very, difficult because we were so cramped. There wasn't a bed that wasn't being utilized.

What size crew did you have?

I had three [boats], so I had actually nine members under me. Oh, and two of the boats were sunk. They reassigned my crew and it was then I was sent ashore. During those tides, it was the only way we could get a decent meal. We were on C rations most all that time. The LCTs were anchored out in the bay, waiting to either come ashore with their cargoes, or getting ready to go back to England for more. We'd go alongside and they would feed us. It was kind of neat to get a hot meal.

What kind of feeling was it? Did you have a feeling of lots of adrenaline and getting things done as fast as you could?

Everything was that way, you were going full blast because . . .

Did you have a sense of importance that these men really needed what you were doing?

You bet. Absolutely. We did take breaks. I said I was shot at once. Well, my crew hadn't had a bath in three or four days and I said, "Let's go down the beach a little ways and we'll

just anchor off shore and we'll go for a swim." And while we were swimming we would hear pops and all of a sudden we'd see things hitting the water. I realized that there was someone shooting at us. We were far enough away that evidently there were still some Germans that hadn't been rounded up yet.

After—I can't remember how long it was—those of us that lost boats were sent ashore. They had a tent camp up above the cliffs. And that became the naval base, the naval supply depot for Omaha Beach. I volunteered to become a guard mail carrier. I didn't know what that was but I found out.

What is it?

I was assigned a jeep and a sailor and I would take (in a briefcase about that size) very top secret documents that I had to have strapped to my wrists. I'd go to Utah Beach first and I would deliver mail to the Army, actually. From there I'd go to Cherbourg and deliver back to the Navy. I'd stay over in Cherbourg, and then I'd reverse it coming back the other way.

A few incidents that happened during my guard mail tour was that I learned a lesson in the difference between the German mind and the American mind. The American mind was to get things done and get it taken care of come hell or high water; no matter what you did, you did it. The German mind was to do things precisely. I don't know if that little thing had anything to do with our winning the war or not. This is what happened. I was delivering the mail to an Army major and he said, "I want to show you something. You see those cans, jerry cans?" (The jerry can was a five gallon gasoline can that the jeeps had). "See that pile of cans?" It was just one big heap. "These are the Americans. This is the way we store things. Now you see this one over there?"

It was another pile and they were all neatly stacked one on top of the other just perfectly. "Those were stacked by our German prisoners and we didn't tell them to do it that way. That's just the way they did it." And it was a little insight to me as to what Jerry was all about.

Did you know what was going on past the beach? Were you getting stories back?

We were getting communications, yes.

You knew the progress of the battle?

Oh yes. And I didn't have to take guard mail everyday. Sometimes I wouldn't go. If I didn't have that job to do, I was allowed to take a jeep and do various things with it. One was to go to the air base that was very close by, where my friend the pilot that I met in Bournemouth was stationed. [If] I couldn't take the jeep, I hitchhiked. A naval officer is going to be picked up by another American pretty quick. I got a ride in a truck and [the driver] knew where the base was and he dropped me off. I got there and I stayed overnight with [my friend the pilot]. While I was there, [there] was a scramble. Not all the planes went, but a bunch of them did. As they came back they were saying it was a turkey shoot. These pilots had got these Germans where their tanks and trucks were all on a road, and they could just strafe the heck out of them. All I got was a verbal description. During the D-day celebrations last year I actually saw the films of the pilots strafing these roads and it brought back the memories of that day at the airport. [In the film] one of the planes had been shot. One of the motors was out. P-38s had two engines. If you fly with one engine you can basically only turn one way. And you've got to be a damn good pilot to get that plane down. This kid was flying one.

Every pilot there was talking to him like you and I are talking. Not through microphones, they were, "Do this; do that; come on now, you can do it." It was kind of exciting. And I remember . . .

He couldn't actually hear them?

Oh yes, he could hear them. It was just like a football game when you're telling the quarterback, "Come on, run or do [laughter] what you're going to do." They had a quart mason jar and inside was a black widow spider. That was the name of their squadron. And that was their good luck charm or whatever.

Other things that I did on my run was, if I had nothing to do, I'd take a little side trip. I didn't have to come back by any special route. One day before I left my buddies said, "See if you can buy some wine." I came to this very little town and there was a bar there. I went into the bar. I had taken French in college, so I asked them in my high school or college French, was it possible to buy some wine? They shook their heads and said, "No, there's no wine." And so I went next door to the post office. There I said in my French again, "Where is it possible?" to a young girl.

And she said, "*Comment?*" Like, "What did you say?"

And so I did it again in perfect English.

She said, "You have a pretty good accent." [laughter]

I learned from that experience you speak English first and then if they don't respond, then you get out your French.

With your luck she could have been from Berkeley High School again.

Just about, yes. But as I left her place she said, no, there wasn't any place that she was

aware of. A gray haired man . . . when I was twenty-four he looked to me like he was seventy; now I'm not sure how old he was . . .

Probably was forty. [laughter]

. . . but he had a gray goatee and gray hair, very erect, very dignified, came up and he said, "Pardon me, but I overheard you speaking for wine and I have some that I would like to give you." Well, that was nice and so I put him in my jeep and we took him to his farm house. We went in the farm house and it was like really seeing the French natives [as] they probably had lived for centuries. We went into the kitchen and he sat us at a table. In came mama and she was dressed in a straight dress and sort of boots. He told her what he wanted and she went down to the basement. She brought up a bottle of cherry brandy and poured a drink for each one of us, but she would not sit with us. She stood in the back. I asked her a few questions. She had beautiful copper pots. And I [said], "Wow, those are beautiful." She told me that they [had] just dug them up. They had hid them from the Germans. A German captain had been billeted with them. He had brought a dog and the dog only spoke German. It was a German shepherd and they wanted to know if I liked the dog. Well, I couldn't take it. Yes, well, this farmer was so wonderful. He related some of the experience of having a German in his house and how difficult it was. How they had to be so careful of what they said and everything.

And he spoke English too?

No, no. This was all in French. I later returned because I knew that they had short supplies of things. I went to our commissary and I asked if I could get a three pound can

of coffee, and I got [another] one full of sugar. I figured those were two things that they probably hadn't seen in a long, long time. The next chance I got, we stopped at the farmhouse and I brought this to them. They invited the girl that was the postmistress over so she could interpret. And so we had an interpreter at the second meeting. I learned a little bit more about their family and all the different things that were going on during the war. I really can't remember too much of that conversation other than the image of these two people and this little farmhouse. They'd lived there all their lives. It was just a neat couple. I had learned that the French country people have always been that way, had been very, very nice. (It's the Parisians that have been kind of nasty, stuck up types.) So, anyway, I brought them this and they were thrilled. And we had some more wine. They never gave me a bottle to take back, I never did get that. All this time my sailor driver was participating in all this (so I hope he's getting an oral history somewhere in America) but I can't even remember his name.

Another time while I was in Cherbourg I found a cave. Someone told me about a cave that the Germans had used as sort of a command headquarters. It was safe to go in. All the booby traps, if there were any, had been taken care of. The sailor and I went in and we each picked up a German helmet, and then a whole bunch of uniforms. I'm really sorry now that I didn't take a coat and pants and whatnot. I would have given them to Reno Little Theater; I'm sure they could have used them. But I did cut off some of the German emblems. And I got a picture of Hitler. I brought it back and turned it upside down in our tent on the beach. And so that was kind of fun. On this trip an American merchant seaman somehow was in Cherbourg and had to get to his ship on Omaha Beach. On the

way from Cherbourg he mentioned that he spoke German.

I said, "Would you like a dog that speaks German?"

He said, "Sure."

So we stopped at the farmhouse. I didn't realize dogs spoke a language or knew a language as much as they did. This guy started speaking German to this dog and the dog just . . . The smile on his face was something you remember all your life; tail wagging. Finally someone was speaking his language. [laughter] He was happy. We plunked [the German shepherd] in the back seat of the jeep and off we went. We got to the beach, said goodbye, and [the merchant seaman] took [the dog] aboard ship. So, I think that was kind of a little incident that was fun to learn.

Mont St. Michel was a little off course, but everyone said you've got to see it so we detoured over there a couple of times. The first time I saw Mont St. Michel, it was very foggy. Mont St. Michel is patterned very similar to what Disney's castle is at Disneyland. It sits on top of this island and pokes up in the sky and it's just magnificent. There we found that there wasn't any ration for eggs, or steaks, or anything. I don't know whether it was black market or how they were getting it, but they had quite a tourist thing going there with the American soldiers and sailors. You'd go over there and get a terrific omelet. So that we did.

One nasty thing that we ran into was [on] one of my very first trips from Omaha Beach. We had to go through a town called Ste. Mare-Eglise. We got there shortly after it fell to the Americans and we were still fighting. I saw two Frenchmen carrying on a stretcher what looked like a ten or twelve year old girl with half her head blown off. That brought the war home again that, "Hey, this is a fighting war here."

I didn't get into too much of combat in any way. I've been honored for being there during the invasion, but the heroes were the Jack Streeters and those kinds of guys that were the foot soldiers, that went through the war and really paid the price. The Navy came out quite well.

I told you earlier that I was a practical joker and I have that kind of a streak in me. While I still had the small boat, LCM, there were about fifty black troops, American soldiers in full military regalia, that had landed at Omaha Beach that were supposed to have gone to Utah Beach. They assigned me to take them to Utah. As we were passing, it was either the *U.S.S. Texas* or *Nevada*—I think it was the *Nevada*—we were going right very close to the men. By then the ship was just anchored and the sailors had nothing to do. There must have been 250 sailors lining the rail looking at us. And so, of course, we were looking at them and I had binoculars and I started looking and way up on the bridge I saw all these admirals, and captains, and real top brass. I got out my signal flags and I signaled to them. [The] signalman then came out on the signal arm and stood way out over the ocean and gave me the roger to go ahead. I said, "Tell your captain I'll trade you." I could hear some of the guys that could read signals laughing. [laughter] "Oh boy, I'm going to be court martialled for this." Pretty soon [the signalman] came back out and said "Sorry, no deal," so I went on. [laughter] It had nothing to do with the fact that I had black troops. It was just I wanted to trade boats with the captain. Everybody got a big kick out of that. I've often wondered what the captain thought when he got that message.

And this is one of those ships that's huge on the water, that will hold hundreds if not thousands of men?

This is a battleship. I don't know how big a battleship is, but it's big. When I first arrived [at] the beach, they were still blasting away at the Germans because it took us a couple of days to secure the beach. They did their job and then they were laying off shore.

What other practical jokes? Before we forget, when you finished at Columbia, you got a leave and you went home. You want to tell a story about going home and tricking your parents?

We had to come home by train. When the train hit Sparks I asked the conductor how long it was going to be before we got to Reno and he said, "About a half an hour," I figured I had time. I knew that my parents would be waiting for me. I got off and got a cab and came up behind them and I waited until the train was coming along. They were out looking towards Sparks waiting for its arrival. I snuck up behind them and grabbed them and gave them a big hug. That was kind of fun.

Now where were we? We were on the beach still talking about the few experiences on the guard mail run. One of the things that I remember brought home the tremendous accuracy of the Norton bombsight that the Americans had. Cherbourg Peninsula sticks way out in the English Channel and is a major sea port. On the road that paralleled the beach, on the beach side, there wasn't a building standing. They were all bombed out. Right across the road was our naval headquarters. Those buildings hadn't been touched. I thought, "Man, that is an accurate bombing." It was the other side where all the German offices were, or a good portion. So that was kind of fun to see that. Then, while on the beach I . . .

You took a lot of pictures during your time?

No, I didn't take a lot of pictures.

You didn't try to take a picture of your unit?

I didn't have a decent camera. You saw the pictures I had that are so small. I don't even remember what kind of camera I had.

You could take anything you wanted at that point if you . . . ?

One of the things that I noticed in all of the films that we've seen over the last year of D-day, is that none of them that I saw showed the mud that we experienced during that week's storm. In fact, it shut us down. You could barely make a four wheel drive jeep go through, it was so bad. A lot of those roads are right along between the hedgerows and they were maybe ten feet wide and it was just one big mud.

The storm hit a couple of days after D-day?

No, it was a week.

Week after?

See, they had postponed D-day for several weeks because of the weather. And Eisenhower finally said we can't wait any longer, we are going on ahead. [They] had given them a very brief window there to do it and Eisenhower took it.

I did take a trip to a town called Avranches, or something very similar to that, and to Bayeux after the English had pretty much secured [them]. That was up in their territory. I remembered one of [my] letters stating that in England I couldn't buy things like perfume. While I was there, my mother, who worked in Reno at the British relief shop that they had set up, where people would bring

various clothing and they would send them to England . . . well, she sent me a ton of stuff that I gave to English friends that I had made. You couldn't buy these kinds of things in England, whereas in France the stores were full of them. And I mentioned that I figured that because [of] the German occupation, the Germans wanted those things for their girlfriends so they got them. So it was another little sidelight that the war brought.

Going back to the Hundred Years War, the British man-of-war always had a rum ration for their sailors. One of the ships that the Germans sunk was a boat loaded with Scotch. In the height of the war [the British] sent divers down and they rescued all that Scotch. And being the gentlemen that they were, they offered American officers a ration for all their sailors under them. We found out about it. Each officer at the base was allowed to go up to the British beach and bring back a load of whatever he could get. A friend of mine came by, we took our jeep and we went up. There had to be three or four acres of Scotch and gin that was piled ten to twelve feet high. It was just awesome. But that's part of their fighting and way of doing business, I guess. And the word was that I had twenty-one sailors under me, so I got a case and a half of gin and a case of Scotch. You had to take one and a half [cases] with the gin. And I forget what it cost me. It was just peanuts.

I told you about Molly Malone, the Western Union clerk? While I was stationed on the beach each officer had to do officer of the day duty, and I was censoring mail. That was part of our job. And here was a letter from Cliff Malone to Molly. And I had an, "Ah ha!" So I called him in, sent word that I wanted to see him. I'd be officer of the day, sitting behind a desk, and he comes in and stands at attention and salutes. I started chewing him out, up and down, right and left until I couldn't take

it anymore and started to laugh. I told him about meeting his wife and the fact that I was from Reno and we became very good friends. (Later, he became county treasurer here in Reno.) So when I got this booze I gave him the case of gin. I kept a half case [of gin] and a case of Scotch because I knew by that time I was going to get married and I thought that would be great for the reception. So I hoarded that Scotch. But that was another little sidelight of the British and how they fight a war.

You already thought you were going to get married? This is still June, and you just met her.

No, I haven't told you that from June. See, I was on the beach five months, until in October I got a leave to go back to England for a week. I went and looked up my wife-to-be. We dated every night and I just fell in love with her. Then we corresponded. She wrote me letters. Every day I got a letter from her. She's a beautiful writer. Now she's a beautiful painter. She's a real artist and it showed up in her writing and she sold me to herself with her writing ability.

What was her name?

Bobbie Weston. Barbara Sible Weston was her maiden name. She was born in England. She's the gal that I met at Branksome Towers. So anyway, we had a correspondence. It's like today's pen pals become married, and that's what happened. I needed some female companionship. The only female companionship I got was one night I happened to be invited to a dinner where there were some Army nurses and then we rode in the back of a truck to take them back to their hospital, and then they took us back to our base. But that was my only female contact in five months other than with the trip back to

England. So you can understand how that happened. I shouldn't say it was my *only* female contact, but my only personal contact.

The captain that was on the beach was a mean old guy and he wouldn't let us do anything. He was sent home for a month, and there was a lieutenant commander who was put in charge of the beach, and he was quite a character too, but a very nice guy. I forget how many officers he had under him; there weren't a very lot of us. He decided that Paris had been liberated, and if we wanted to go to Paris we could have a week off. We had to get there on our own and get back. The orders stated, "You will proceed to Paris, France, and carry out the verbal instructions given you." Well, the verbal instructions were that if you're not back in a week, the next guy can't go. Now can you imagine the pressure of getting back? How we got back, or got there and back, was by the Free French. The cost of going and coming was a carton of cigarettes. We could buy a carton for a dollar and a half or whatever it was.

Did you smoke?

No, I never. I didn't. I would always get my ration and I could use that for various things. I was on the beach for a month or more without being paid. When I went back on my leave to England I had to borrow money to do that. I got to Paris by the Free French, and the Frenchman driving the truck couldn't speak English, but we got along fine. About four o'clock he was tired. We had been going all night long. He pulled over, and the next morning as we woke up the most beautiful garden you ever saw in your life was right above us. It was a garden of the Palace of Versailles. My first . . . I saw it from the outside. Then we went on to Paris.

The U.S. Navy had a hotel reserved for officers of the Navy that were assigned there.

I took my orders in and they accepted them and I got a room for a week for free. It was just one night after another where we had fun. I remember going to a dance there and seeing the French people dance. They were just going like this. There wasn't any jitterbugging or anything of that nature unless it was the Americans. The French were dancing up and down. It was kind of fun.

[Was it] easy to talk to French people while you were in Paris?

Oh yes.

While I was on the sidewalk, a little gray haired woman came up to me and she said, "*Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?*" which means "Do you want to go to bed with me?" And, you know, I was shocked. She was at least forty years older than me.

"No, thank you. I [laughter] wasn't that kind." But I couldn't believe it. I realize now what she was doing. She was trying to get money to live on. It was very dear; that was a sad part of the war.

Before we leave Paris, was Paris pretty much OK at that stage? The war had passed it by, the French were liberated . . .

The French had surrendered before Paris was bombed too badly, so there was very little damage in Paris that was visible. I'm sure there were sections of the town that were hurt but we didn't see them. And of course an American couldn't do wrong. We were their heroes. (There was quite a contrast going back in 1960 to Paris, in seeing the attitude change that had taken place in fifteen, sixteen years.) I went to the Louvre and Notre Dame and all the various sights and it was interesting. I picked up with an Army captain, he was sort of like me, and we went around, thought

it was fun. On the way back I stopped at Reims and I did get a picture of the Reims Cathedral's stained glass. It must be thirty feet in diameter and it was just gorgeous. Fortunately, the Germans didn't ruin it. I got back in time so the next guy could go. It was an experience to be considered a hero.

As the war was moving away from the beach, from our neck of the woods, they decided to start reassigning us. The war in the Pacific was going pretty strong and we were all afraid that we'd be sent there. By now I had decided I wanted to marry this girl and I really wanted to go to England. I found out that there was a guard mail job opening up in Plymouth; with my experience they accepted me. And so they sent me to Plymouth, England. Bournemouth is thirty miles—like out between Reno and Carson—from Southampton. The guard mail run was between Plymouth and Southampton. I delivered the mail. I [would] get to Southampton maybe four o'clock in the afternoon, and then I was free to take the car within the thirty mile radius. Bournemouth just fit that thirty mile radius. I'd go back and stay in Bournemouth for the next two nights. The second night I'd get the car and we'd have a car that night we could go in. The next morning I'd get up about five in the morning, get to Southampton, pick up the mail, and zip back to Plymouth; stay there [that] night. So that was pretty good duty. You had been stationed on a beach in France for five months and this was something new and exciting.

I brought back a parachute that I had gotten, and my mother-in-law-to-be made a wedding dress out of it for my bride. One of my fraternity brothers, who was in the Army, was stationed in England and he became my best man. I had been *his* best man back in Berkeley when he got married, before we

went into the service. It was kind of nice to have that exchange.

I forget how long we were there in the guard mail thing. It lasted three or four months. And then they shut that down and I got a job at Exeter, which was the supply base. There my wife and I lived for a while and she became pregnant, which is a course of nature. There wasn't too much excitement on the Exeter base. I didn't know I was going to be in the warehouse business, and it's the first time I ever saw a forklift truck. A forklift truck is the workhorse of any warehouse, obviously. When my dad said he was going in the warehouse [business] from his letters, he said, "Now you make sure that you learn something."

I had real rough duty there. We were in [a] Quonset hut as I showed you in the picture, but that Quonset hut was about from here to the Business Building, from the first tee to the other nine holes of the golf course. We had free access anytime we wanted, so I learned to play golf there. I really had never played it much in my life and I still don't play it much; I played twice this year.

I didn't know my [wife's] family too well. One day while I was officer of the day, an Englishman came by with a sack full of live chickens, and he was selling them. And I thought, "Oh good, I can take that up to Bournemouth." I bought one of them from him and I tied a rope around his leg and I kept it for a couple of days before I could go to Bournemouth. I arrived and I had this live chicken, thinking we were going to have a nice feed, and no way was my family going to kill that bird. It just would not be done. We lived on the third floor, [with] a high balcony. So we stuck it out on the balcony. About five o'clock in the morning it was on the rail and it was cockle-doodle-dooing and waking up all the [laughter] neighbors as well as us. I

had to leave the next day so they made me take it back.

I had it in my jeep. I picked up an Army service man who was hitchhiking. He was going to see his girlfriend and I said, "How would you like a chicken?" So I gave it to him, and I've often wondered if he went through the same experience that I had. [laughter]

This is about January or so?

No. I was married December 6, 1944. I was there on the guard mail run for three or four months, so [now] it was probably March or April of 1945. I was in Exeter for quite some time.

One of the things that disturbed me a lot about the bureaucracy of the service Being a supply depot we had all kinds of useful items that the British civilians could have used: blankets, sheets, pillow cases, pots and pans—you name it, we had it. I was told five million dollars worth of stuff. They dug a big pit and dumped everything in it when they closed the base down and didn't give the English a damn thing. Well, I would hope the English knew about it and dug it up and used it. But why would we do something . . . ? Here's a country that had been bombed to death and in short supply of everything and we did that. That's unconscionable as far as I was concerned. That part, probably more than anything, turned me sour on the Navy. How I wanted to get out of it! I just was really ticked. Our life in Exeter was OK.

I've told many times to politicians in America an experience that I had on shore patrol duty. I had to go out once a week with a British plainclothes detective who was armed. One night he was telling me, as we drove around, that before the war if a civilian person committed a crime with a gun he automatically got the cat-o'-nine-tails,

whipped. As a consequence, the bobbies never wore guns. He was a plainclothes man, but he had to, because Eisenhower had come along. I've read on it since that Eisenhower thought that was cruel and unusual and made them stop it. And to this day they probably wished they still had that law, because the gun murders in England are as bad as they are in America. As long as that law was there and the felons knew that if they committed a crime they were going to get whipped, they took the easy way out and they used something else. You can kill a person with a knife but at least the firearms were not a source of problems. I thought we ought to do that here. It just makes sense to me. (A couple of years ago when the boy was caught with graffiti over in Singapore and they caned him, the same thing. I think today if we were to cane the youngsters that they catch doing graffiti in America, that [the graffiti] would stop overnight because [caning] hurts. And they get the message real fast. If they do it once they're not going to do it twice. When they tell their buddies how bad it is, [they'll] think of something else to do but not that. And as far as I'm concerned, if I were a politician, that would be one of my first things. And Jeff Griffin, the new mayor, is a good friend of mine and one of these days I'm going to sit down with him and go over that story again and say, "Let's see if we can get away with caning. Give it a try for six months and just see what happens." Then the ACLU will come along and screw everything up.)

So now Exeter is closed down, my wife is pregnant, and I really don't want to leave England. I don't know how they worked it, but everybody had a number that was over there. And when your number came up you were sent back to America or to the South Pacific. But because I had a pregnant wife, I guess they [felt] sorry [for] me and they

allowed me to stay. They transferred me to London, and there I became the Naval housing officer. Actually I was [an] assistant for a while . . . a lieutenant j.g. and not an ensign. The commander was the housing officer and he left.

It was a very interesting thing for me to do. I had to meet admirals to seamen and get them accommodations. I had to go around and meet all the various realtors to find out where flats, as they call them, or apartment houses, as we call them, were available for Americans to rent. I had to know the top people in every hotel because I might get an order this morning with admiral so-and-so who was arriving tomorrow and he needed the reservation. I had a network of various people.

The pictures that you saw of the VE Day parade, that night they had fireworks in London that you wouldn't believe. What went on in Reno on the Fourth of July was...I mean there's just no comparison. The awesome beauty of these things. Well, we were invited to watch them at the top of Claridge's Hotel, which was considered one of the number [one] hotels in the world. The assistant manager had become a good friend of mine. To this day we correspond with each other. On VE Day I called him in London. Unfortunately, he wasn't there, but I called just to say, "Hey, remember that night at the top of Claridge's?"

VE Day came. The baby was born. I, of course, wanted to...I knew my orders were coming up to leave. While I was doing my job as housing officer, a Pan Am ground person came to me to see if I could help him find a room. And I did, with me. I happened to have a room and an extra bed, so I invited him to stay with me. Then I finally found him a flat. He said, "Now, if there's anything I can ever do for you, well, you just let me know."

There were over fifty thousand babies born in England to Americans that were going to go back. They were [not] allowing babies under six months to go. What happened was, some of them, I don't know why, were dying when aboard ship. They said no baby under six months could go aboard ship, and my son was four months old. I now had orders to leave. I didn't want to leave [my wife] over in England so I called my Pan Am friend and he said, "When does she want to go?" He got me reservations that were stacked up for months, on a plane any day I wanted. I had to come back [on] my liberty ship, which was an eleven day trip. I got to New York and my wife flew in on the sixth of July and I arrived on the fourth of July.

Now, not too many Reno people know that there were two brothers named Redman in Reno that grew up here, that both became admirals—the first brothers to make the rank of admiral. One of them was in charge of Twelfth Naval District in San Francisco on Yerba Buena Island. And the other was head of naval communications in New York City. They had grown up with my parents. My dad told them that I was coming. About two or three days out of New York, a message come, "Is Ensign Bender or Lieutenant Bender aboard?" And yes I was. "Well, tell him that Chief Petty Officer Owen will pick him up as the ship docks." That's all it said, and that he will be staying at [Admiral Redman's] apartment. All my buddies on board ship were assigned to various hotels. I was saying, "Yah yah, I'm staying with the admiral," and sort of flaunting it. The chief petty officer was there, picked me up, took me out to the gate, to the taxi stand, and there I got a taxi. Well this doesn't sound like he's taking me [laughter] . . . I arrive at [the admiral's] apartment, which was on Park Avenue, and the bellman says, "Who have you come to see?"

I said, "Well, I'm coming to stay with Admiral Redman."

"Admiral Redman is not here. He's gone to the country for the weekend."

"Yes, but I'm staying in his . . .

"He didn't tell me."

Now what do I do? This is like three in the afternoon. My first day home after three years in Europe in the Navy and it's [a] big holiday, and my God. [My shipmates] were all going to go to the Pennsylvania Hotel. Maybe there's something there. [The bellman] hailed a cab for me and I went to the Pennsylvania Hotel and they said, "Well, the only room we have is a bed in the Turkish bath." Picture that. Right alongside the Turkish bath is a bed that you pull down. That was my first bed. I left word with the doorman where I would be, or someone . . . hell, I got the message to [the admiral]. And he got back, and called, and he apologized, and he was just as cordial as anybody could possibly be. He took me in. Of course, the doorman did the right thing, but I was really pissed at the time.

My wife arrived the sixth of July. [Admiral Redman] took us out to dinner. It was really nice.

Here was a four month old baby that had flown across the Atlantic, seventeen hours—a quick flight in those days—in a plane called the Constellation, Pan AM. Now we're to fly home to Reno, but the plane didn't stop in Reno, so we were to go to San Francisco. My folks were staying with Admiral Redman in San Francisco. It took us...I forget how many hours to fly...but we stopped every two hundred miles because that was as far as the plane could fly, to gas up. We stopped in Little Rock, Arkansas. It's the only time I've ever been there, and I really don't ever want to go back. We finally made it into San Francisco and my parents met Bobby and Chris.

Chris, of course, is your son?

Chris is my son. We stayed at the admiral's house. I could hardly wait to see some of my buddies. After the first night I took the car out a couple of hours and went over to Berkeley and saw friends. Then we came to Reno. We lived with my folks for about four or five months. I finally got a little duplex, which was our first house. And that's pretty much my war experience.

By then your father had started . . . ?

My dad had started the Bender Warehouse Company. I had the opportunity to go on to college under the GI Bill of Rights, but I knew that there was no way that I could really do proper by a wife and a child and go to college. Whatever the bill provided, it wasn't very much money. So I opted to go into the warehouse business with him. It's been a good business.

He was a banker, as I told you, and the reason he went into the warehouse business is that during the war he became the director of the war production board for Nevada and northern California. The war production board was to do all kinds of things for the war effort. Among them was to find a storage space for the Army and the Navy for the goods going to the Pacific. There was no warehouse in Reno. The closest one he could get was up in Chester, California, just north of Susanville, in an old lumber yard. It was a wooden building, and the railroad engine, a coal burning engine, went down the middle. How it didn't catch on fire, I don't know. As the war was winding down, [my Dad] thought the warehouse business would be a good business. He studied it and found that even during depressions, it was always a steady business. That's how he started with warehouses.

He wasn't really so much of a banker, he was an entrepreneur?

He was an entrepreneur.

When he needed to, he was a restaurateur and then he was a . . .

That's right, yes. He sold the restaurant in 1939. With the San Francisco Fair, the unions just broke him. It was my second taste of unions. The first taste was when he decided to have a commissary in Oakland. We had a little restaurant that wasn't much bigger than this room. It had four booths and about five stools and that was it. The union was very strong in Oakland, and they demanded that he hire four chefs. There's no way he could make it work, so he shut it down. He lost that part of the business that he had counted on for income. The second time was the unions in San Francisco that dominated the restaurant business on Treasure Island and the Fair. He lost so much money the first year . . . between what the fair took of his gross profits and the unions took by having people that you didn't need, he lost his shirt and he decided to get out of the business. He came back to Reno and went into the real estate business. Then he got this job as war production manager. To show you what a good business person he was, the same job in Idaho, in Boise, had seventy-five people. He had two employees. He got a commendation. They sent him back to Washington to get a commendation for an efficient job. But he got his ass chewed out for not hiring more people.

Somewhere you had to go through some sort of formal discharging?

As we got off the ship, as I remember, we got our discharge papers.

Pretty simple.

Yes.

And you're coming back to the United States and everything also was pretty simple. You weren't one of those people who were waiting to get enough points to come back and everything? It just kind of all worked out.

I had enough points before I came back so [it] did work out, yes. I was lucky. I did not have to go to Japan. That's what I feared more than anything. Now I was a father and I sure as hell didn't want to risk my luck again. I could have easily been blown up on that barge when the tide went out. Had there been a mine under the barge that they had missed, you wouldn't be talking to me today. And the two LCI captains each got the Silver Star or Bronze Star, I'm not sure which. We got nothing. [laughter] I figured I got away with enough stuff over there that could have been my exit to this world.

I told you one of the things that interests me in this is how you feel about WWII now and its place in history. The Second World War, we never had anything like it. We had a couple of things since, and maybe Korea was close, but with the bomb and the end of the Second World War, we don't appear to be facing that kind of war now. How do you feel about war in general?

You know, we had our hands tied in Korea, which was the next war. We couldn't cross the Chinese border. They could cross the Korean border and come after us, but we couldn't go after them. I think MacArthur was right, he could have ended that war real fast. And then we get to Vietnam and it's the same thing all over again. And now McNamara's come out and said what he said about the mistakes.

There were mistakes. There's mistakes in all wars.

I can't remember the year, but it had to be twenty years ago, I was invited to attend the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. Mortimer Adler was the founder of that. He was from Chicago. They brought in owners and vice presidents on up of businesses from all around the country. There were twenty of us. They had a big roundtable. Before we went, they sent us, I don't know, thirty books or more. We had to read *The Death of a Salesman*, the whole thing. We had to read chapters from Plato and Socrates, and then Machiavelli and things of that time in Italy, and the Peloponnesian Wars. Each day, in the mornings, we would have a roundtable discussion about a chapter out of a book, or the whole book, or Willie Loman, who was the salesman in *Death of a Salesman*. We spent quite a bit of time on him. When we got to the Peloponnesian Wars and all that, I thought, "What I've learned from this is that nothing has changed over two thousand years." Human nature being what it is, we're always going to fight each other. I think it's proving itself in Bosnia, certainly in Ireland.

I was in Ireland one time and we were on a golf course. It was rainy, so I got under a tree. There was a gardener under the tree, an Irishman. We were looking over the golf course and he said, "You know, this all used to belong to my family and the damn O'Briens took it away from us."

I said, "Oh, when was that?"

He said, "Well, that was four hundred years ago."

Well, Jesus, but they keep that mentality.

The Bosnians and the Serbs, the Muslims and the Serbians, are still fighting a war that took place a thousand years ago. I don't know how we're going to change that. I think it's stupidity on [the part of] the European

nations not to have told the Serbs that if you cross this line, we're going to annihilate you, period. We have the ability to just level your country. There won't be anything left. Now you make up, become friends, or be annihilated. Take your pick. It's that simple. The United Nations would only have to do that once. It's like cat-'o-nine-tails. By what we're doing over there, telling the Muslims, "You can't get arms" We know they get arms from the Muslim countries, from the far east. How they're getting them I don't know, but they're getting them. But not in the quantity that they need to defend themselves. I really seriously feel that we're making a terrible mistake in not [giving] the Serbs an ultimatum that if they don't stop, their mothers, their sisters, their wives, their children won't be around for them to come home to.

When the war was over and you came back to Reno, how did you feel about the future? What did the future look like to you?

Well, my dad started me out at two hundred dollars a month, which was not an awful lot of money. Of course he was starting a new business. He had three employees. Today we have 150. It wasn't too bad. I had saved a couple of thousand dollars. I had some stake. I had a family. The business was tough. I was a laborer. It taught me an awful lot about the warehouse business. I don't know if you remember Welsh's bakery?

Yes.

OK, we stored their flour. It would come in by rail car. I would unload the rail car with another helper, put it on pallets. The fork truck could take it in the warehouse and store it. Then we'd put the pallets on a truck and deliver it down to Welsh's bakery in the

morning. I got pretty strong in those days since those sacks were 100 pounds. I learned how fast it took to unload a car, and how fast it took to unload a truck, and why you had to be efficient in various things. My life was taken up with learning the business and trying to make an income, because we weren't wealthy by any fact of the matter.

My dad died in 1952. In 1949 he had received an account, a little handy hot washing machine. Now, the washing machines were about this round and about that tall and they were made for ladies' lingerie. We had about six thousand of them, I think, in the warehouse. And Albert Bowen, the assessor, came around and said, "What do you have in the warehouse?" Because it's tax time and Nevada had an inventory tax just like California did. It incensed my dad, and he came up with the idea, "Let's make Nevada a free port." All these rail cars are going through Nevada; they're not stopping but they're full of merchandise. California has an inventory tax and it was on the first Monday in March. The end of February, Nevada would just get swamped with merchandise for a week. As soon as the first Monday in March ended, out it would go back to California. I think Washoe county got all of \$100 in taxes. But the cost of all the inventories and the this, that, and the other things . . . When [my dad] came up with the free port idea, he took it to Alan Bible and to the Chamber of Commerce and they liked the idea. They took [the free port idea] to [the] legislature. The legislature bought it. And so from 1949 to about 1955 we tried to make a go of it. The warehouse did fairly well.

But no big company would come because it was a legislative law. It had to be part of the state constitution. If they were going to spend two hundred thousand dollars in a building, they didn't want the legislature to change the

law. We got together a group of people, and we convinced the legislature. My cousin was an assemblyman. He helped a lot to get the law made into a constitutional amendment. It finally passed in 1965, I think.

What was your cousin's name?

Marvin Humphrey.

So, I guess the answer to my question is you didn't stop and think about thirty or fifty years in the future. You said . . .

The Navy League and the Naval Guard up at the university, they all wanted you to join the reserve and whatnot, and I would have none of it.

The blankets?

Yes. They buried the blankets.

One quick thing, you wrote a letter to your parents as soon after D-day as you could. It's just interesting if you wouldn't mind reading it.

We were told that we could write home and let our family know that we were safe. This letter is dated June 9, 1944:

Dear folks,

By now your hair has turned a few shades whiter but there's no real need to worry. I'm well and safe and by the looks of things I will remain so. I'm afraid this is about all I can say.

Love,
Frank

That was the extent of it.

CHARLES H. CLIPPER

They were the Leathernecks, the old breed of American regular, regarding the service as home, and war an occupation, and they transmitted their temper and character and viewpoint to the high-hearted volunteer mass.

—Colonel John W. Thomason

Ken Adams: Let's chat a little bit about who you are . . . give us your name, where you were born and when you were born.

Charles H. Clipper: My name is Charles Clipper. I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on February 7, 1917—I'm a WWI baby. I lived on the left gulf of Sheepshead Bay. I went to grade school in Sheepshead Bay.

What did your father do?

My father was a bartender in a place called Fort Hamilton, an Army post. He had a delivery, delivering beer and soft drinks by the case. My mother was a seamstress.

What was your father's name?

Sidney.

And your mother's?

Mother was Hattie.

And you said that you moved in 1922 to . . .

I was born in Bay Ridge, which is in Brooklyn, in a Norwegian hospital; the doctor's name was Dr. Livingston, by the way. [laughter] We moved to Sheepshead Bay in 1922 [into] a frame house which we had for many years—don't have it now—that was down near the water front.

Your mother lived in that house until she died in 1979?

Yes. Well, anyway, on to school. I went to James Madison High School. I did not graduate [from] James Madison High School, I went to work. I had three years that I had



CHARLES H. CLIPPER, USMC

done. I went to work and I went to night school. You had to go. I learned typing, bookkeeping, and a few other things. I went to work for a dental lab. In 1936 I enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve. I knew we were going to go to war. I was aware of what was going on in China, the Japanese and the "Rape of Nanking," they sunk the [U.S.] gunboat *Panay*. I was working and I was a reservist until 1940. I went on active duty in 1940, so I never had a draft card.

You were about twelve years old when the Depression hit. Was the Depression difficult for your family?

Yes. Well, we didn't starve or anything. We were never on relief, what they called it in those days. Both my parents worked and I sold

newspapers and even shined shoes down on the waterfront. I went to work as a kid.

When you were in high school, it was more important that you get a job than that you finish high school?

Well, I had thought about it. Nobody said to me, "Don't do it." [laughter] I did it, and I regretted it ever since. Anyway, in the service, I took the GED test. I took that in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The reasoning for that, they wanted to commission me but they didn't have any figures on me. I took the test and I made enough score that I could qualify for second lieutenant, see. [laughter] Then later on while I was in Korea, I came home [when] my grandfather passed away. That was in 1952, I guess. I went to the high school and they gave me a certificate that I had graduated.

Your grandfather lived longer than your father?

Yes. My grandfather was in the British Army when they took the Suez Canal in 1860. He was in his nineties when he passed away. He had a saloon in Greenpoint, in Brooklyn, which was a real bad neighborhood. He was a little guy. I guess I take after him because he didn't have much hair. My father had hair, but my grandfather didn't. [laughter] He'd leap over the bar. He'd be packing a chair, and he'd throw guys out of that joint. He had a very loud voice. And you know, he had a church right next door, Saint Mary's.

Did he immigrate from England, then?

Well, from Germany; then he went from Germany to England. All I know is he used to ride me all the time, said: "When I was sixteen, I shouldered a rifle, and we had an old Civil War rifle which was as big as I was," that type

thing. That's about all I can tell you about him. But he did have this saloon. Then he came to live with us.

Your father died in 1945?

Yes.

The reserves were like a part-time job? You got a little extra money?

Yes, I got a check every three months, I guess.

Did you get any basic training when you first joined?

Well, yes, we did get basic training. You're right on that.

Where did you do that?

It was in Bay Ridge at the armory. There was a big naval armory down there. The New York State Naval Militia they called it at that time, see. After 1940 they drafted everyone and all the names changed and so forth.

So I was a reservist and we went to camp two weeks every year, just like they do today. We had drills once a week. I would go down to the subway in Sheepshead Bay, take the elevator and walk about six blocks down to the waterfront.

We did a lot of activities. We had a lot of sports. They taught us a lot. I learned to type. That's where I got in that typing bit. In the beginning I was a company clerk. I was typing this and that and I didn't like that, I wanted to get out of that, so I got moved into the rifle company that they had. In those days we had Springfield rifles.

Once a week you would go to drill and, probably, spend a couple of hours there?

I went from, I would say, six to ten o'clock, something like that. We played sports after that. They had a big room there and we played basketball. There was a bowling alley and all these other things.

Once a year you'd go to camp for two weeks in the summer and do some sort of maneuvers?

Same as they do here.

It's always a joke in the regular services that reservists are weekend warriors and not very well trained.

Not in those days. That was 1936 to 1940.

How well trained were you and were you prepared for active duty?

We went on active duty in September of 1940 to Quantico, Virginia. We were there until January. So we were on the rifle range, we were on drills and training, and a lot of outdoor work, you know.

Were they training you as an individual at this point or was it unit training? Had you been assigned to a unit?

It was unit training. I was in B company.

You were a rifleman?

Right.

The Marines don't promote people very fast so you're . . .

I did make corporal in the reserves, you know. I went on active duty as a corporal.

Quantico was a good place to train. That's where they trained all our PLC's (Platoon

Leader Classes), which I was involved with years latter, and every other thing. But anyway, I reenlisted in Peleliu. See, I was on active duty all this time and in 1944 on Peleliu I got banged up and wound up in a hospital. I was recovering from some shrapnel and some other stuff. I got hit the 15 of September, and it was about three weeks that I was at this mobile operating base. It was on an island in the Solomon Islands. September 8 was the day I enlisted and my time was up. While I was in there I reenlisted in the regulars. I was held twenty-nine days or something like that. So I became a regular from there. My enlistment was up in 1948 next time. I reenlisted again. I was a first sergeant then. Korea breaks on June 25, 1950. The next thing you know there's a bunch of us got commissioned. We were senior noncommissioned officers and had a lot of experience, so I was offered a promotion. Then I went to Quantico [again]. We went through basic training and that sort of thing at that time.

I did about twenty-nine years service, and if I hadn't met my wife, I would have stayed in until 1968, I guess it was. I had a choice, see. I came back from Okinawa in December of 1964, and I had orders to Norfolk, Virginia, which was a big naval base. I went there for duty and I didn't like the duty I had. I was a major now. I was in the S&C (Secret and Classified)—security, classified, top secret material and all that stuff. I was, like, in a vault. [laughter] I had a female lieutenant working for me and a marine warrant officer, and some enlisted types. There was nothing going, so I went up to headquarters in Washington. I wanted to get the hell out of there. I knew the 1st Marine Division was going to go to Vietnam.

They said, "You can't. You just got here."

So anyhow, I put my letter in around May, I guess it was. I knew what was going to happen. Mr. Johnson, who was the president,

made one mistake in that Vietnam situation. If you go back to World War II and Korea, the reserves were called to active duty immediately, if you stop to think about it. They didn't do that in Vietnam. That was one big mistake they made. If they had done that we wouldn't have all this problem today, you know, about women and this and that. I thought surer than hell that this would happen. Well it didn't happen . . . OK?

I got married three months later, and we have been together ever since.

That's an interesting point you make. I didn't realize until we started this project how important the reserves had been. We depended on those reserves, not only for active combat but they were the nucleus of our training corps. The first thing that we had to grab ahold of in 1942 to send into combat were young reservists like yourself.

August 7, 1942, we were the first American offensive group in combat. [The U.S.] lost everything prior to our landing on Guadalcanal. One thing after another was being taken away by the Japanese. We got in there and spent about six months there and we got a good education. But we had already had a good education. We were hard enough for it because we went to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. We were down there working our butts off. It's hot and it's coral, and we walked twelve miles one way getting to where we were going to train, and then we did all our little things, and then we walked twelve miles back to our camp.

This is January of 1941 when we were in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The 1st Marine Division was the 1st Marine Brigade—we didn't have any divisions, period. We only had about 18,000 Marines on active duty prior to World War II. So, we all got a lot of

good training down there. We were aboard ship, [running] ship-to-shore operations, working in small boats and trying to improve landing craft.

Let me get this sequence right. What month of 1940 did you go on active duty?

I believe it was September.

September of 1940. So then you went . . . ?

We went to Quantico.

You were there for . . . ?

Well, until, I would say, early January. I think it was January 6th. We went to Norfolk, and went aboard what they called APDs; an APD was the old World War I four-stacker, four piper destroyer. Remember, we gave fifty of them to Great Britain around 1939 or 1940? Anyway, they took two boilers out of there and they made a troop compartment. The troop compartment was just like this deck, here. There were no bunks or anything. [laughter] We went to Cuba, to Guantánamo Bay.

That must have been a miserable trip.

Well, I never got seasick. I'd been on boats all my life, living close to the water and all that. But the Navy saved a lot of money on chow, because the marines weren't eating. We had ninety-nine marines on there. I went aft and slept with the petty officers, which were up topside in the stern. They had life lines around there, see.

That North Atlantic can be something! Leaving Norfolk, we broke a screw, the propeller on a destroyer, and got hung up off Cape Hatteras, [North Carolina]. I don't

know how many days we were stuck there. With this going on, you could see why no marines were eating. We finally got down there. I remember going topside. A lot of the marines came topside and, jeez, they had blankets around them and they were pale. Some of these Cuban gals came by on a boat and they were hollering at the marines . . . in other words, they were a bunch of prostitutes. Some of the marines wanted to jump over the side. [laughter] But that was our beginning. We had good training down there.

How long were you in Cuba?

I think we left in May. The rainy season came, and we were living in tents, of course.

You're training as a unit for combat?

Right. I was in the 5th Marine Regiment. When we got to Cuba we were reservists on indefinite active duty—for a national emergency, whatever it was. My company was assigned to the 5th Marines. I wound up in Fox Company of the 5th Marines. These were all regulars, OK? And here we come along, and they broke us up completely. B company, 1st Battalion, from New York, was finished. Now we're in the 5th Marines. My address was Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Brigade. This was before the war. That's the way it was until December 7.

You trained through May and then you went to . . . ?

We came back to the States and got moved out of Quantico to a place called New River, North Carolina. We built heads, mess halls

Heads being latrines?

Latrines.

But this place we went to was New River, North Carolina. Camp Lejeune was being built . . . which is a big place now. FDR did all this. But it wasn't ready for occupancy. So they took us from Quantico to New River, which was not far from Camp Lejeune. We were at a place called Onslow Beach, in that area. This is where we trained.

We were out in the field every day. We went aboard the old transports. We were always out on the ships. We'd go down to the Caribbean. We made landings. We made a landing at a place called Solomon Island off Massachusetts. Strange thing, we wind up on an island called Solomon—very unusual. We're continuously training—continuously. [We're at] the rifle range firing weapons. We were on the go. I got news for you, nobody had any fat on them. We were all black as the ace of spades. But we're continuously going and training and using different type weapons and equipment. You know, we didn't have much of anything. When the war broke out we left so early we had World War I equipment. But we were hard . . . we were hard as rocks.

Were you ready for war?

Oh, yes! Shit, we wanted to get the hell out of New River. We hated that place. I don't know about today, but the attitude in those days [was], we wanted to be part of it. That's why we worked harder than hell. We knew we were going to get into it. I mean, let's face it. Then it happened. And then I'm training people.

What happened when you heard about the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor?

I was in New Bern, North Carolina, it's an old Civil War area where a lot of fighting took

place and everything. That's a tourist area, you know. That wasn't far from camp. Well, New River Tent Camp, Jacksonville, North Carolina, is where we were at that time.

You said you had been out driving in a car. Another marine ran up to you and said that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.

We left the girls right there and took off. Just got out of the car [and left]. I was trying to get music instead of leaving the station on. Of course, there was no music, everything was commentators. [laughter] It was a disaster! But that was my exposure.

This sergeant who I knew, a fellow by the name of Keogh (who is still alive today) him and me took off. We were both corporals. Eddy Keogh was with the China Marines. He got out in 1940 and then they called him back to active duty. That's how I met him in the 5th Marines. He was an old salt, and we became buddies. We went through a lot together. He's retired, lives in Florida now.

When you say you ran, you didn't run to the base?

No, we were looking for the "slop chute," the place they sell beer. We were going to have some beers, because we knew that things were going to be not this way. [laughter] We saw the trucks coming in, see, that was to pick us up. They had MPs of course. We just stayed in this one bar. They didn't have bars in those days in North Carolina; it was just a table and a counter or something. When we were ready we went in. We got in the back of the truck.

Your first assignment was . . . ?

Everything's exploding now. As an example, after Pearl Harbor, I think there

were five thousand men a day reporting at Parris Island that had enlisted to fight Japs. We wanted to kill Japs. That's the way all the things were going. And they didn't have enough drill instructors. Somebody had to do it. So they turned to people like me, and I was no real old salt. Actually, I had only been on active duty about two years. [laughter] But anyway, you learn fast.

They put us on a bus and when we got to Parris Island they put us on guard duty. There was forty of us they took out of the division. I was one of the forty. I get corporal of the guard because I'm a corporal. I've got walking post. [I'm up against] gunnery sergeants and platoon sergeants and first sergeants, "You goddamn punk, what are you doing here?" I got to carry a pistol, and they had a rifle, see. I never laughed so much in my life. But anyway, that's the way things were done.

In those days the TO [table of organization] of a rifle company was about 100 men. We went to war with this 100. We had a corporal as a squad leader. I was the corporal. [We had] eight-man squads. And you had three corporals and a sergeant. In an infantry squad, you had three BAR's and you had four fire teams. You had a scout, you had a sniper, you had a BAR, an assistant BAR-man, and so forth. In 1943 we were in Melbourne, Australia, reorganizing. So everything changed. That all went from eight-man squads to thirteen men in a squad.

And when did that change take place?

When we left the 'Canal and went to Melbourne, Australia, we reorganized. They revised the T.O. is what they did. They had a lot of good people in the service on both sides—officers or commissioned and enlisted. And they experimented. They did a lot of things even before we went to war.

For god's sakes, when we were still in the States we'd be out on the range with a pistol, and instead of standing out there shooting it we were down in the crouch position. They did a lot of experimenting with different weapons. We trained hard on this stuff so you wouldn't get killed right off the bat. It's like Braddock when he fought. You remember the French and Indian War? They paraded out in the boondocks and George Washington's out there with all his colonials and they're behind fences and trees shooting everybody. Well, that's what you call jungle warfare—you know, guerilla warfare. So these were the things we were doing. That's why we were down in the tropics. That's the best place in the world to train because the weather's good. We were just full of piss and vinegar.

How long were you at Parris Island as a drill sergeant?

I brought two platoons through. The first platoon I got involved with they had a senior D.I. Then he left in five days to form another platoon so I wound up by myself. I had seventy-five people, see. And I don't want to go into the mechanics here. You got to take them to the barber shop. Then we went to the rifle range. It was during the winter time and it was cold. We lived in tents. We spent three weeks there firing weapons. Then you had to qualify with your personal weapon, with the rifle. And then from there they were sent out to go other places. That was my job.

The marines have a reputation for basic training boot camp as being a pretty rough place to be. Did they just say, "Make marines out of these guys." How did they do it?

They had already gone through that stuff. They went through boot camp in Quantico.

I understand that, but that's not the same as instructor training. Did they say, "Go make a marine out of these guys?"

We were always under leadership of top NCOs [noncommissioned officers], regardless of whether we were still reservists or we were in Brooklyn or we went on a two weeks active duty. We'd go to Quantico; we went somewhere in New Jersey; we went to Peekskill, New York. The two weeks you were there, you were continuously under control of the regular marines.

But when you're a drill instructor, you're the guy; you're the Marine Corps.

Well, we got through it. They gave us a fast training aspect, if you want to call it that. We knew what we had to do. Because of the war and everything, the training was cut down to ten weeks, I think it was. Normally it would be twelve weeks. But they had to get those people out of there and get them to the units. I didn't make a lot of waves and grabbing people and kicking them and using four-letter words and all that. I didn't do that. But I got my respect. I got those people out there and I told them what I wanted, and they were all scared shitless. Once you got them out of the barber shop and they got all their hair off and everything, and they're getting their clothes now, all their civilian [identity] and everything is gone. That went home. No more civilians. I didn't have much trouble.

You were, by your own description, in pretty good shape.

I weighed about 135 pounds in those days. I only weigh about 150 today, so I never gained too much. Yes, I was in good shape.

So running them around and getting them in shape was intimidating on its own?

F-2-5, that's a rifle company, Fox Company, had a captain by the name of George C. Skinner. He was an Academy man, about six foot four, and he was from Massachusetts. We would go out every morning—this is in North Carolina—and we would walk along these railroad ties. They used to call us the "Galloping F Company." We'd walk six miles in one hour, we were double timing more or less. And the little guys, like me, were in the rear. There were people that had been in Haiti and Nicaragua; these were non-commissioned officers that I had met when I got there. We were all thrown in together. They had come from where I came from. We were a division then. February 1, 1941, the 1st Marine Brigade became the 1st Marine Division on paper. We didn't have the bodies, but they had 1st, 5th, 7th, 11th Marines, etc. When we left Parris Island with the last platoon we were on Division's rolls.

That was a temporary duty assignment? Those men that you trained went to your outfit?

Yes. Well, they didn't come to mine. They went throughout the division. I didn't have anybody in the company that I went to that I had as a drill instructor. I asked for Fox Company because I had been in the Fox Company of the 5th Marines. We would go into the 1st Marines, now. That's the 1st Marine Regiment, not Division.

What's a regiment? How many platoons, companies . . . ?

Well, it's triangular. There's three platoons to a company, and four companies to a

battalion, then, because you had the machine guns. There's three squads to a platoon, three platoons to a company, and three companies to a battalion. Today they run around eighteen hundred [men].

And three battalions to a regiment?

That's correct. And then it would be three regiments to a division. Well, then your artillery is the fourth regiment, see.

You'd finished taking two platoons through basic training . . .

. . . boot camp . . .

. . . and then you went back and you asked to be assigned to Fox Company again.

Well, this was when we reported in to division. They sent us down to the 1st Marines, see. Everything's falling [in place] now. They've got huts; no tents now. You could probably get almost a platoon in one hut. Anyway, we checked in, and reported in to the sergeant major.

Where was this?

This is New River, North Carolina.

Back to North Carolina again?

Right. When we got there I said to Deacon Marsh, this platoon sergeant, "Do you have any objections or do you want to go to any particular outfit?" He was a big old farmer from Indiana. He went through the whole goddamn war and never got a scratch. Finest man in the field, a troop leader . . . but in the States, in a liberty port, number 10, very bad.

Anyway, he says, "Yes," so we went together. We both reported in at the same company. See, I was corporal then. I made sergeant right after that. I liked this guy. We drank beer every night in the slop chute. [laughter] We'd have bottles of beer, they didn't have cans then. And we went into platoon formation with all these beers.

And guys like him, I learned a hell of a lot more from than I could have learned . . . He used to call me "Curly," out in 'Canal, see. I had a lot more hair [then], of course. I was a corporal and he taught me a lot of things. I always remember one thing he said to me one day. This is on the 'Canal, I guess it was. We were up in the ridges then. "Goddamnit," he says, "you don't never ask someone to do something. You tell him to do it!" And you know, it's little things like that you don't forget. It's nice to be nice but you got to be military and you got to be firm. The troops loved this guy. He was something else. He was a good weapons man. We were together just about through the whole 'Canal campaign . . . and Peleliu . . . we were in it all, together, and we came home together on a ship.

We had what they called the "old breed." We had a cadre there of about 18,000 that I told you about. We had a sergeant, Mills his name was. He was from Mississippi. He had a red beard and he was carrying a Springfield rifle. These guys in the field were dynamite. They never got hurt or anything. They knew how to survive. You learn little tricks. I never had any marks on me. I never got this or that. I was very careful. I learned a lot about field sanitation and hygiene through these old timers down in Cuba. I watched how they worked and what they did and I copied a lot of things.

In Europe that was really critical. People did not know that most of the issues were basic

hygiene. They did not know how to take care of themselves in the field.

True. But every company had some of these people. Then naturally, after the 'Canal, we were all pretty knowledgeable. A lot of us got promoted. And hell, I went from a sergeant in 1942 to gunnery sergeant in 1943, and I made first sergeant in July of 1944. The first sergeant went home, so there was an opening. I was called up by this board of officers and they gave me the Marine Corps Manual and said, "We're going to examine you orally. Read the book." So I go read the book, a big book, you know. Anyhow, they ask me these stupid questions, this and that, and I made first sergeant. There was no written. They didn't believe in written tests in those days. And I didn't like it, either. We had a situation where a gunnery sergeant, the one man they wanted, failed. So we all had to take it all over again. They gave us an oral exam so he could make gunnery sergeant, too. I got mad about that.

After you finished in Parris Island you were assigned to a regular unit and you're back to training in North Carolina again?

Well, we were there. Now we're really going at [it]. They're bringing in deserters in civilians clothes who had deserted from the Marine Corps in China or other places. They reported in to us in my company, as an example. They had no gear, no nothing. We got four of them that way. They all had BCDs, Bad Conduct Discharges, see. They did bad things back in China and some other places. So everybody's back in the Corps now. Then we got new people in. You got people who get sick or can't hack it and all these good things.

So now we're training again. We're going aboard ships. I told you we went up to

Solomon Island and made a landing there. [It was] colder than hell. They've come out of boot camp, and now they get the hard facts. They're going to get acquainted with their units, with their people. We make every marine [know] who's on his left, and who's on his right. You got to do this. It took a lot of training, hard training, because we were really going at it. And you got these kids just out of boot camp, and Christ, you tell them, "shit," and they squat and strain, you know.

But now we're moving, departing, and we got no officers. All we got is seven officers. We had six lieutenants and one captain. And then on to 'Canal and all of a sudden we got six captains and one lieutenant. They all got promoted at the same time, see. Of course, naturally, we got to Australia and so forth. But anyway, it's a continuous thing. Training just doesn't stop. And then when you're in combat you start losing people. You got to bring replacements in for that. You take a kid fresh out of somewhere, you say, "You're going down to that squad." He doesn't know anybody down there or anything. There's not much time for training there.

How long were you in New River, North Carolina, before you finally did get sent some place?

Well, to break down what happened in the division, the 1st Marines and the 7th Marines were not formed when we were in Cuba. They were on paper. And the 11th Marines was on paper. The brigade was the 5th Marines. On the west coast was the 6th Marines, they're an infantry group. Half of the Fox Company, 5th Marines, went down to the 1st Marines to be A Company. They split those companies and they got a nucleus, a body of trained people. And that formed another company, or a squad, whatever it may be. So that's how we all got

going here and going there, and now we're staying where we are. And now we're training, working our tails off. We got to requalify. We got new weapons. We've got to go out to the range, you know, and teach them how to shoot.

What was the new weapon?

Well, it was Springfield's, .30-'06, model 1903. You already got a rifle, but when I got transferred I had to turn my rifle in, so now you got a new one, see? Everybody has to know everybody and they're doing a lot of training and pushing like hell. And you got night training going on and all these things. The officers, of course, have got to know their people. The new NCOs that had been transferred in, he's got to know his people. And it takes a while. Then you had a lot of schools—pistol, compass, night marches, and different things.

A lot of these kids, they were good kids. Most of them were high school graduates. A lot of them came from General Motors. I got involved in the beginning, forming this company. They made me the property sergeant. I went through the record books. And I see this guy worked for General Motors, and I go, we're going to put him in . . .

We were forming a platoon, a small platoon of nineteen men called a weapons platoon. This is in a rifle company. They would have the light machine guns and the light mortars, 60 millimeter. We had two mortars and we had two machine guns. So I took all the guys with mechanical experience and I assigned them, I had gotten approval on it, to this platoon. And then the NCOs, of course, we filled in. They learned their weapons. They had to learn to run out with that mortar and set it up. And now you get into time elements; how many minutes it's going to take; how many seconds to do this. You're running these

people hard—and I mean hard. At night when they hit the hay, they went to sleep. And that's the way it was. It has to be that way.

Now we go across country on a train. There were other units. Some left in January. They went to one of the islands near Pearl Harbor—Samoa. They sent a regiment out there because . . . You know, we don't know everything going on, guys like me and some of the officers, too. Then the 5th Marines went out, went to Norfolk, then by ship to New Zealand. That's where we were all winding up; Wellington, New Zealand.

Our group went out in trains. We had the diner on the train all the way to Saint Louis, and then from there all the way to Oakland.

When did you go?

June. I was in charge of one train, see. We got off at the sidings. We did a little running and PT. We did that all the way. Then we went to the ships. These are cargo [ships] and what we called troop transports. The ship has to be combat loaded, which is: *what you use first, goes on last*. In San Francisco, when they loaded those ships, they [loaded] a lot of cold weather clothing and everything. That was to fool anybody that was observing or whatever. We take off. We got one cruiser protecting us, the *Salt Lake City*, that's all. [There were] about three thousand marines. But no, nothing happened. We got there. The first thing we did was unload the ships. We had to unload all that stuff.

Now, we get in to Wellington, New Zealand and there's a god-damned strike on. The stevedores, their union, they're on strike. There's a war going on, and we're protecting their country, New Zealand and Australia, and we are the working party. [laughter] We worked eight hours on and, I think, four hours off, around the clock, for ten days.

A full colonel is in charge of the working parties! We had to unload them and then reload them. You talk about you had to be in shape. [laughter]

And then we decide—we don't decide—the powers that be, the general, decides he wants to make a landing. So we go to the Fiji Islands; I think it was the island of Koro. We had Higgins boats in those days. They were made in Louisiana and they were all wood. The small boat I was in, we didn't go ashore because some of the boats that did try to get in, the coral reefs tore them all apart. So the thing was a failure.

So we came back to the ship. When we got back to the ship, as a sideline, the Navy's eating steak. We haven't had dinner yet, see. Well, we were supposed to have stayed on the island. Anyway, we get up there and they're not going to serve us. They're giving us hot dogs. All hell breaks loose. Goddamn marines and sailors going at it, and finally somebody comes down there. We got steak. [laughter]

You literally got in a fist fight over the food?

Yes. Amazing.

There was always a lot of tension between the Marines and the Navy. But it almost sounds like sometimes it was good for morale because it kept everybody kind of fired up, it gave them kind of a pre-season practice.

We all had nicknames for each other. On liberty there would be some problems. We had seven navy in our company, seven hospital corpsmen. They dressed like we dressed. They trained like we trained. Everybody does whatever the marine does, even the chaplains and the doctors. They wear the same uniform. If we're going to run forty miles, they're going to run forty miles, too. So you got closeness,

here. That's the other thing we train these kids on; to take care of these corpsmen. The only word a marine knows in combat is "corpsmen." It was good. There were times when we lost a sailor, this was toward the end of the war, and they had to give up that green uniform and go back to whites or blues. They didn't like that. They wanted to stay with the marines. So we got along very well . . . very well.

So after your fistfight, you got your steaks. What did you do then?

It's just like me and the platoon (I had a platoon at that time). [You] let them go at it for about five minutes, then say, "OK, shake hands, that's the end of it."

You always have grounds, you know. It's an old saying on a ship, "You can't stand here, marine!" You get on a transport and you get fifteen hundred marines on there and a crew of about three, four hundred, you got a lot of people on an APD and there ain't much room to move around. In the bunks you got so much room. [laughter] Of course, you know the ship has to be clean, and they sweep, swab, all this stuff. We'd call them swabbies and they'd call us jarheads and other things. But that's part of the game. Some of my best friends are Navy.

So after Wellington you're . . .

Well, we took off for Fiji and the thing was a disaster. Now we join up with the fleet. This is carriers, battleships, destroyers, cruisers, and the amphibious. We were in the amphibious group, the open ships. My God, they were everywhere! All this stuff is the convoy. We maybe had eighty ships in that. In an amphibious operation, it isn't all just amphibious ships like we're on—they're not the fighters. The big stuff, they're the ones

who fire before we hit the beach and make sure everything's taken care of. We were rendezvousing in the small boats. Anyway, we landed on August 7, it was on a Friday around eight o'clock in the morning, and hit the beach.

My outfit, the 1st Regiment, and the 5th Regiment were landing on the big island, Guadalcanal. I think we were on the left and the Fifth was on the right. We had no opposition when we hit the beach. Matter of fact, we wound up opening coconuts with our bayonets. The island where we hit, the Japs had a lot of Korean laborers there. They're bigger than the Japanese. We didn't know in the beginning what they hell they were, but we knew they weren't Japanese. The Japanese were probably having breakfast when the bombardment started because all their stuff was left. When the bombardment started, they all took off for the hills. Over on the other side at Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo, there was all hell breaking loose. We had the raiders over there, one battalion of the 5th Marines (the 2nd Battalion), and we had the paratroops.

We had a paratroop battalion with us, originally, but there was no place to use their chutes so they never did make a jump. How in the hell are you going to land in a jungle? Anyhow, they were trained for that. They were also good soldiers. They were trained just like the Army's commandos.

As the days went by, for two weeks, we had no opposition. We made combat patrols, we were on watches every night, and we were on beach defense.

What was your specific assignment?

I was a squad leader in the rifle platoon.

It was two weeks, not until August 21, [before] all our planes came in. But we had a fight before that. The Japanese had landed

their marines. It was called the Battle of the Tenaru, "Hell's Point". It was right in front of us where we were on the beach. Then our airplanes came. We had no air support for two weeks because we didn't have anything ready to go anywhere. And finally then the old F4F, the Grumman Wildcat . . . They could really stand up to the Zeros. Prior to that, the Zeros were knocking everything out of the sky. But when you hit a Zero, they were so flimsily made, they just "poof"—exploded in midair. We got to see a lot of air raids. We had air raids everyday.

In the letter you wrote in November you said you had 111 air raids.

So far, yes. "Washing Machine Charlie" came over . . . always at lunch time around 12:00, [would] drop some bombs and take off. That was to harass us. Then at night they'd come in. Then they had an artillery piece. I forget what we called that, but we had a name for it. They would fire that thing at night. And then one night in October they sent in their big stuff and bombarded us; [from] about two o'clock in the morning until about four o'clock in the morning they just bombed. We were on beach defense then, out in the sticks. We had little holes. About three of us were in a hole and one kid starts farting. We had one man who was a knucklehead. He fell asleep through the whole bombardment under a coconut tree out in the open. You know, that heavy stuff had to have [been loud]. I'll tell you, it rattled our cages. And this one kid, he didn't hear a thing. [laughter] We were all protected. Nobody got hit where we were, I don't think. All these bombardments don't do a hell of a lot, but they scare the hell out of you.

We were busy, then. We were moving around the island. We ended up in the high ground where you could see all the big battles

going on. At night you'd see tracers going that way and tracers going this way and all this other stuff; I'm trying to figure where in the hell is that going.

We got stuck one night, one behind the other, in the boondocks and we're holding on [to each other]. Guys got you on a belt going through the goddamn bushes. [laughter] But these [things] have to be done. You've got the spirit. But it takes the NCOs and it takes the officers.

On Guadalcanal, we had one corpsman for our company. And then the battalion had the first aid station and probably a corpsman and a doctor, see. On Guadalcanal we had two doctors. And at the Battle of Tenaru, we lost one doctor who was killed immediately. They moved the sick bay or the aid station right up [front] and the men are right here shooting up a storm. Matter of fact, I was in the reserve going up there, and the first aid station was right there. They killed a doctor, his name was Saphier or something, and we lost a corpsman. That's how close they were. There was a mistake made there. They should have never set up the aid station there. But everything was And we're on beach defense and we're moving down while all this stuff's going on, see. Anyway, we got out of that.

You're in reserve all this time?

No, nobody was ever in reserve on the 'Canal. We had a perimeter. In the beginning we got hit. After that, for a long time, it seemed to be something going on here and something going on there and nothing where we were. We used to say, "Well, they're afraid of us. They tried this one time, so they ain't going to fool with us." We were patrolling everyday. You're out in front of your lines and you're going here and you're going there. And, actually, we didn't have that many firefights in my outfit, the way

it turned out. But at the beginning we did. We got the first batch. And we lost some people, you know. But you're all part of the game.

How long were you there?

We were there from August 7 to about December 21. We moved around. We were all pretty bad with malaria and everything. I didn't get malaria there, but I did get it when I got in Melbourne so I must have had it on the island. I had two sessions in Australia, and that's a bad place to have it because that's liberty, you know. [laughter]

Were you taking quinine?

Atabrine. No, Atabrine came out in Melbourne, that's right. When we went to Cape Gloucester in New Britain, the Atabrine came in, and that was the yellow things. The corpsman was there in the chow lines, see. You had a canteen, water or coffee, the corpsman said, "Open you mouth," and he'd throw it in. The reason they did that, a lot of guys wouldn't take it. When they washed their dungarees it looked like yellow around here. So we had Atabrine all the time. They didn't have any quinine in the beginning.

We had a lot of dysentery. I would say half of the people had yellow fever or malaria. So we had more casualties in that area. But, the men [who were ill], there was no place to put them. They stayed on line because we didn't have a hospital or anything—they had to stay on. So we were pretty bad when we got to Melbourne. We really were.

In December you left Guadalcanal and went to Melbourne?

No. My battalion got pulled off. We were on a high speed transport and they dumped

us off, I think it was, in the New Hebrides. They put us on an island where we could rest up. We were in pretty bad shape with malaria and everything. So we stayed there about a week. It was full of flies and every other thing. Then we got back on a ship and this took us to Australia. The other groups that left went to Brisbane first. Brisbane had too much malaria, so they went back on a ship to go to Melbourne. We came into Melbourne, and we all tied in around January 13 of 1943. We were there through September.

One of the things you said, was that this was where the reorganization took place.

Yes. We got more bodies now, see. I believe we went from roughly 100 to 220 marines.

You were talking about the reorganization. Now the platoons have about forty-five men in them and more fire power?

They took the Springfield's away from us.

Now you get the M-1's?

Yes, there was almost a big battle over that. The marines didn't want to give them up. Those Springfield's, you can throw in the mud or anything else and [they] still shoot. The M-1's had a compensating spring in there that you had to keep clean. Anyway, a lot of men did not want to give them up. This Deacon Marsh I was telling you about, this gunnery sergeant, he had a Springfield; he didn't give his up. Of course, being a gunnery sergeant he had a star gauge rifle, it had been bore-sighted. In other words, a beautiful weapon. Deacon didn't turn his in.

I don't know why they always picked on Deacon. Marsh's got it under his cot. You know he's got it slung there. This colonel

walked in, he looks it over, and he says, "How do you know that weapon will fire?"

Old Deacon says, "I'm not much of an armorer, colonel, but I know it will fire."

I became a platoon sergeant. Our regiment had the senior colonel, Cates, who later became commandant. They put us in what they called the Melbourne Cricket Grounds. That's where the Olympics were, and where you play tennis, you know. We were billeted in the stands. What they did in the stands, [because of] the steps, when they put the bunks in there two legs would be shorter than the others, so the bunk would be level. And that's where we slept. We got a lot of colds there, see. We were there in January, that's when they had their holidays—they're reversed. But, anyway, that's where we lived. The other regiments were spread out all over in the area, if you follow me. I was a platoon sergeant there, and that's when I had the 2nd Platoon. I had a new company officer, and so forth.

Now we're going on with training. We're teaching the Aussies how to do ship-to-shore operations. We're on their ships, see. We're training together. We're working together. See, when we go up north, they come with us, some of them. I was in New Guinea, Finschhafen, I think it was, and I was with some of the AIF. I was only there a couple days. That's when we went up to New Britain and Cape Gloucester. There was an air strip at Cape Gloucester, and the Navy wanted it neutralized. Matter of fact, we had Christmas dinner in New Guinea on December 25. We went aboard these LSTs and LCIs, different type landing crafts they had in those days, which they don't have anymore.

We landed on the 26 of December 1943. We landed at a place called Tuali, a village which is in New Britain. We were assigned, the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, as a road block. Everybody else went up to Cape Gloucester

to take the air field. We were to stop any Japanese coming from Rabaul or the other place down here, Sag Sag Bay. We were the road block. We would stop them from going out there. And the Army went around on the other side. They were on this side of the island, and we were on the other side of the island. We landed simultaneously. We never did join up on the island.

Which island is it now?

This was on New Britain. There's a big complex there. But Cape Gloucester was where the air field was. We were about twenty miles in, in a village called Tuali. We made our patrols all the way down . . . We were out on patrols every day. One night they attacked us at night. We had a sergeant, Robison, his name was, that was in my company, in G Company. He puts on a flashlight and asks a stupid question, "What's going on out there?" And he gets cut in half with a machine gun—stupid. But anyway, we held our own, that night . . . we probably lost about two men. We did a pretty good job. We had one man, he got a Navy Cross that night. He picked up a machine gun, one of these LMGs, they have a short barrel on them, and he carried that gun. This was after the gunner was killed. He kept the Nips from coming through, see. Giuseppe Guiliauo—that's what his name was. He died here about a year ago.

You're mainly in a defensive position, and you do patrols from there. A common picture of the Marines in the South Pacific is as an assault team, but you really aren't doing assault.

Well, let me interject. The assault is when you first hit the beach, OK? In my group on the 'Canal, we hit the beach and did everything. [We had] no opposition until a

little later. Now, the other group over at the other side, they were getting clobbered before they hit the beach. They had to fight their way on. And that's what happened in Peleliu and other places. It's very nice when you can get a foothold. We had our first phase and our objectives. We accomplished everything, so we set up a half-assed camp. We got security, patrols everyday, and watches at night.

We made some long patrols, where people got hurt. We had a lieutenant in the 2nd Platoon, the platoon I was in. I told him not to go into this building. He was a smart-ass, a French Canadian and he had been with the British Marines in Dieppe, in Europe. And anyhow, he got hit by a sniper. We had to haul him all the way back, over hill and down dale. You had to carry everybody. We didn't have any stretchers. We [took the] tops of our utilities and so forth, and made a half-ass stretcher. We carried this guy. We had to change hands, of course. I could go so long doing it, and some body else the same way. We had a couple of big men in our platoon, they could hold on a little longer. We brought him all the way back. And he survived. Then he got killed on Peleliu about a year later. But you don't know where anything is going to happen and you've got to be on your toes.

How long did it take you to bring him back?

Oh, it was hours.

People who haven't carried a body, they don't realize how heavy and awkward a human body is. You had to change arms because you just got so exhausted you couldn't hold on any longer?

I was a gunnery sergeant then. I didn't have to do that. But, I thought, I got to take my turn here, too, you know. So you're right.

You do what you want to do. It was difficult. The ground, you know, would go down and you'd have to go up a little stream to go back up. I don't think we were more than ten miles from where we were going, but we weren't moving fast. First of all, we had light, 60 mm, mortars with us. Then we had the light machines guns. So those fellows had to bring their stuff back. And we're taking our turns, and of course we're all sweaty and every other thing, to get him back. We're lucky we didn't have any more casualties, because we don't leave anybody anywhere. We had a corpsman with us to administer first aid. We got him back and he was evacuated as soon as we got back to camp.

But the patrolling is the most important thing there is. You just can't go in somewhere in security. Your perimeter . . . you got to be careful. The Nips were very good at infiltration. As they did on the 'Canal, they snuck in on some of our areas, right on top of us. They tried to take that air field; they came damn close to taking that airfield. They had already secured Tulagi and those other places I was telling you about. That was across the bay. Tulagi was where the seat of government was when it was the British Solomon Islands.

We had the paratroopers and the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, and the raiders. They put the raiders and the paratroopers by the airport. They figured it would be quiet there. This was in September. We had moved around now, inland. Nothing's going on where we are. There was, like, a half-assed mound or small mountain, and everything was going on over there. All of a sudden, all hell's breaking loose. Well, what it was, the Japs hit. They wanted to take that airport. That was the main thing why we were there so long and they lost so many people. They wanted that airport. That was their mission. They lost a lot of ships and everything else. And the poor

paratroopers and raiders were right in the middle of the damn thing and they lost a lot of people. But they held the line. There were two Medal of Honors given out that day. One was posthumous. He was a major then, but I knew him as a captain, and a hell of a good soldier. But you know, you can't plan who's going to do what to whom. And you don't know what you're going to do until it happens.

How long were you on New Britain?

We were there until April if I remember right. And it was rainy. It rained all the time. We slept in jungle hammocks there. It has a zipper this way and a zipper this way. And our utilities, our skivvies, our socks, everything, got mildewed. You could pull them apart, being damp. Even our 782 gear, our pack and everything, was starting to mildew. You could never stay dry. You sleep in your hammock at night, and your butt might be in a little water, but a blanket would keep you warm in this weather.

We were on a little island all by ourselves. We had what we called LCTs, these are small landing craft . . . well, not small landing craft—they'll carry a tank. The Army operated these. The army had an amphibious corps. Are you aware the Army had more boats than the Navy had in those days? We're not talking about big boats though. We're talking about ships. But this is true. They did have more boats than the Navy.[laughter] And they were attached to us.

The LCT—it was the first time I ever saw those—they go "shooooo, shooooo." They had a new weapon. When they dropped that ramp, they fired these [if there] was anything on the beach. Then we'd run out.

So we made patrols. Every day we did this, we'd come back to our little place, and then we'd go out again. We did this all through the

area. And all we were doing, we were picking up stragglers. We were picking up Japanese who were emaciated, their weapons were rusted; they had just about had it. And now we got a problem, bringing these people in. What in the hell are we going to do with them? We didn't have any medical . . . oh, we had maybe a couple of corpsman, but we didn't have any doctors. And there was some funny things took place here, but, what are we going to do with these people? But there's a lot of things that happen in wartime. So that was the purpose of that.

The island was secured and they finally took us out. We went to the Russell's, a place called Pavuvu. It was nice, clean . . . coconut trees. Of course you got flies, you got coconut crabs, you got a lot of other things. [laughter]

Did they replace your gear? Did you get new socks and all that stuff?

Oh, yes. But there was weeks we didn't have any underwear at all. Socks, they just rotted. And our utilities, they were holey, and messy and, you know, all that sort of thing.

We had a funny incident happen when we were in Melbourne, Australia. We were at a place called Dandenong. We used to call it Ding Dong. It was a tent camp about eighteen miles out of Melbourne. When we left the cricket grounds we went out there for training; firing weapons and all that.

We were with the 6th Army now, General MacArthur's. We had an inspection one day and we fell out in front of our tents. We were by the road. My company was in the first group there. And down at the other end was where the honeydew pots were, the latrines. Well, anyway, we fell out with our gear on. They wanted to inspect us. And they came out in their pinks—the officer's gloves and swagger sticks. Here we're out there standing in front

of our little eight-man tents with all of our gear on. And this Deacon Marsh, he's about six-three, six-four, and he's got his pack riding way the hell up. One of these officers came by, "How come you got that pack so high?"

Old Deacon—you'd really love this guy—said, "The higher up the weight, it's sort of balanced." In other words he got it down here, you got it up here.

But, anyway, we were cruddy looking. We hadn't gotten any new clothes yet—you follow me? What we had was raggedy-ass. Well, they relieved the battalion commander. We got a new battalion commander. Now what they done, they're issuing us Army clothing, their summer stuff. Their stuff is a lot heavier than ours. And they issued their shoes. Well, I wore an 8EE shoe, Marine Corps, and an 8EE, Army, was no good. I finally found something. And the only thing we had, we had a green cap. The Aussies issued, like, an Eisenhower jacket, it was sort of green. It was an Aussie jacket. And that's the only things we had. We don't have our utilities. They didn't give us any new utilities, yet. Finally we got some Marine Corps types. But it took a while.

When we first got there, when we went into combat, they took our sea bags and everything and they stayed in New Zealand. Our service record books, all the administration, stayed there until we got to Australia, and then everything went there. You don't carry that crap with you.

I got into trouble on Guadalcanal in August of 1944. We were on our way back up, now. We were making landings, and snooping and pooping, for training. We were on our way to the Palau Islands. We were on liberty, anyway, on the beach. This gunny, Deacon Marsh, was with me, and he wanted a bottle of whiskey. The Army was selling whiskey for about thirty-five, fifty dollars a bottle. He got one. We was having a hell of a time. We missed

the boats to take us out. We were on LSTs out there, and they were out in the bay. Our amtracs were right on the beach. I had about eighteen men in my company. I couldn't get word. I couldn't do nothing. Here we are, but I said as long as I saw those goddamn amtracs, I wasn't worried about anything. Anyhow, we spent the night there. There's an Army group in these pyramidal tents. There was a black first sergeant, Bruno Frank he was, from Michigan. He was some kind of an engineer out there or something. So I told him who I was and told him, "I got some buddies here and I got no place to put them. Can you help me?"

"Oh, sure, what do you want?"

I made bunks and took care of everything. And we got the hell out of there in the morning. We got out to the LST, and the LST I'm on, the battalion commander, Russ Honsoweta, is on there. All the kids are getting busted to PFC. I'm bringing the men in first. Now it's my turn and the sergeant major's there to take me in, and my captain's there. The commander says to my captain, "Well, do you want to keep Clipper?"

And the captain says, "Yes, I want to keep him."

So he gave me a summary court martial. At that time it was deck, summary and general. And then, let's see, summary became special; that's what it is today. So I got a court martial hanging over my head, OK? But there's no records on Guadalcanal, [they're all in New Zealand]. We get to Peleliu and all this crap. Then I get banged up. I come back for duty and then I go up the hill and see the commander and he says, "I don't know whether to give you a general court martial or a decoration. Get out of here!" [laughter]

So, they brought you back to another island to rebuild, retrain, reorganize and get back to strength?

They also broke out some beer and soft drinks for us, that type thing.

Colonel Chesty Puller was our regimental commander when we left New Britain. There wasn't much going on. I got acquainted with this group of Seabees. There was a chief, Joe Murphy, and I said, "You think you could clear an area around here where we could get a softball field?"

"Yes."

So we got an area, and we get some softball equipment. The kids go play softball. Now I got this big area here, and I'm looking to make what you would call a casino. I got together with the Seabee guys. They'd come down and eat with us all the time. Hell, they had better food than we had, but they liked us and we were their security, in a way.

"Jeez," I told them, "I would like to build something with an overhead on it so we could have a place to play cards and everything."

Everybody got paid in thirty, one-dollar bills. There was no way to spend any money. We had cards, so we could gamble. I don't know where the hell we got the cards . . . they must have come from somewhere. But anyway, I wanted this goddamn thing. Well, believe it or not, I got a working party out of my own company plus the Seabees. We were there for a while, and they built this thing up. They even had lights put in there.

And the colonel, Colonel Chesty Puller, our regimental commander, came down one day, "What the hell is going on here?" I had never been in Nevada, yet, and here I've got a goddamn casino going. Chesty Puller was very happy. He liked that shit. "This is good for morale . . . good for morale." [laughter]

Now what would you have done? Here we are on an island; there's nothing there. You still have to have security, but there was nothing going on. It was just waiting to get the hell out

of there, is what it was. By building this thing, it was a big morale factor.

We'd get cigarettes from the Red Cross. And these were, like, "Twenty Grand" and "Sensations" and "Wings" and all this other stuff. The cigarettes we were getting, we didn't care for these cigarettes. This is Australian territory and the Aussies, I think, paid the natives fifty cents a day or gave them one cigarette a day. We turn around and give the natives a whole carton of cigarettes. Goddamn Aussies come down the next day screaming and raising hell and I'm going at it with a sergeant major Aussie. "You're screwing things up here! They won't listen to us!" [laughter]

There's three things with a native, if I remember right, you got to be very careful of. It's just their priority. Let's see, it's the pigs, the garden, and the women, I think, in that order . . . or the garden and the pigs. And that's taboo, no touch. By the way, the natives smell something fierce, you didn't want to get near them.

And I found out later on, we were also paying the natives U.S. Government. When all the coconut trees got shot down and destroyed, they got compensated by the U.S. government for the damage that was done. So it was a lot of things that were paid for, really. [laughter]

I heard the story that somebody negotiated for the government to pay for the coconut trees.

I'm trying to think of the name of the company. It's a common name. They're still in business. A lot of this was British territory.

When you went into Peleliu, you were wounded the first day?

Yes, that night. We had a tank attack. Came across the front.

Did you land and take the beach?

No. There's a reef, and the amtrac comes up on the reef to go to the beach. [There could have been] 100 guns out there. They were knocking a lot of us out of the water. We saw an amtrac pull out that had already got in, and the one I was in went in where he went out. From the reef, we're at the edge of the beach now, so we're basically on the beach. But we don't get off the beach. Everybody's on the beach. Everything's happening and you can't go anywhere.

You're under fire all the time coming in?

That's right. That's right. And I remember the squad I was with, the squad leader, Corporal Locke, had his head down and there was grenades flying around and every other goddamn thing. I said, "We got to move out." I had to grab him by the scruff of the neck and kick him in the ass. "We got to get out of here." We had gotten to where we had a tank came in. I'm behind the tank and I'm holding the phone and then all of a sudden the tank is going here, and I threw the phone at the tank. [laughter]

Anyhow, we got into our Phase One, which was at the edge of the airfield. That was in the afternoon, I guess. I had to go down and give a report on casualties to the battalion. I found the sergeant major, he was with Chesty Puller. I gave my report and I was surprised to see Colonel Puller there, you know. So I got the hell out. I got back to my outfit. We're setting up, doing different things, and these tanks come through. The Japanese were riding the tanks with camouflage brush, etc.

This is a counterattack on their part?

They came out of their underground [areas]. They came across our line. We had

one bazooka up there. We had the 1st and 2nd Platoons on line, the 3rd Platoon in reserve. I went over to get [another bazooka]. I wasn't in a hole. I was doing something I shouldn't have been doing. I got hit with shrapnel. As the kids told me later, "You were full of blood and we thought you were gone."

Were you hit in the chest?

I was hit here in the hand . . .

And in the throat . . . ?

Right. They strip you now. When you're wounded, you lose everything. They take your pack, your helmet, and of course your weapon . . . everything is gone. In my case, they put me on a stretcher and I was carried out to the beach. There's a lot of things going on, and whoever was holding the stretcher, they dropped it a couple of times. They took me out and they put me on a LST, whatever it was. They had a hospital ship out there, the *Samaritan*. They took this thing I was in, the stretcher, on a winch. [laughter] I remember I was laying there and I was looking down and the fucking water was way down there. They brought me in and put me on the ship, see. That was the end of my sojourn there. I was very unhappy about that. And the company commander was gone.

While we were on the ship, I was top side. We had bunks slung up. You could look over and see the water. They had a flood light circling the big Red Cross [on the side of the] ship. Somehow, we had a destroyer out there with us, and the destroyer, through their PA system bellowed out, "Turn that light out!" Well, nothing happened. It came over again, "Turn that blank, blank light out or I'll shoot it out!" The light went out immediately. [laughter]

Do you remember what you thought when you got hit?

You're head's ringing. I went down and I knew something was up, I didn't know what. The first thing they do is give you this sulfa, it's a drug. All the corpsmen have morphine Syrettes and that's the first thing they do and that settles you. I was sort of semi-conscious. I wasn't out or anything, but I was sort of stunned—maybe that's a good word for it. Like I said, I was up where I was wasn't supposed to be. I should have been in a hole or something. But I was trying to do something. Anyway, I did get the other bazooka up.

They knocked out four tanks. There's one little boy—well, the kid got a Navy Cross. PFC Fessler knocked out three tanks. He got out of a general court martial. He went over the hill in Melbourne and married an Aussie girl. They picked him up and he wound up in Peleliu. [laughter] I can tell you a lot of funny stories like that.

So, you were twenty-nine days in a hospital ship or someplace . . . ?

The mobile operating medical base. They were big elephant Quonset huts. Everybody was there that wasn't buried at sea. There were a lot of people buried at sea in that ship I was on. They had burials every day. I was all banged up and I had a cast. It's hard to take a shower, I'll tell you that.

You had a cast on your hand because your hand was broken?

Yes. It all straightened out. I think the shrapnel worked its way out. They couldn't operate. They said, "It will wear itself out."

I guess it has. But I was awful sore. I'm walking around like this. But it wasn't a major

thing. I did lose a lot of blood. I went around through the station, to see a lot of my men and other people that I knew.

The doctors, the medical officers, really got an education because they have people to operate on and experiment [with]. Like, some men got hit with a 37 or 47 mm shell, and they build, like, a skyscraper to hold the arm up and to heal this. Talking to doctors through the years, this is how they learn a lot through war—World War I, World War II, etc. They get casualties, all kinds of messes, and they don't need any permission from anybody to do anything. They learn a lot about surgery, which is a good point.

And after you had recovered?

I went back to duty.

Back to the islands?

Yes. I went back to Pavuvu in the Russell Islands. We all went back. I came back and there were a whole bunch of them there.

Was your unit on line when you went back?

No. This is R&R training now. We're off the island. My regiment—what we had left—was pulled out three days after the battle started for us. The rumor used to be: "Well, that's the end of the 1st Marine Division."

We didn't need to go there to begin with, because we were the stumbling block for MacArthur going to the Philippines at that time. The only reason we went over is because of the air field, which we took. But it wasn't necessary. We lost . . . we had about seven thousand casualties. The Army had landed at Anguar, which was south of us, and they had to send a regiment over to replace us—this is Chesty Puller's regiment.

There was nothing left. There wasn't even one company left. They put everything together of what was left.

I went back to the unit. We're back in rehabilitation, getting replacements, and getting people ready to go home. There were people having to draw straws to see who gets to go home. We're reorganizing and [getting] new equipment and everything else, and [doing] paperwork, of course.

It was real funny, the first sergeant of George Company, Sphinks, he saw me on the other island. When I came back twenty-nine days later, I went over to the NCO mess. He saw me, "What the hell are you doing here? You're supposed to be dead."

But, anyway, we stayed there and we reorganized. I was requested to stay on. I got excused. My company commander hadn't come back yet, he was still in the hospital. I saw the colonel. I said, "No, I don't want to stay." We were getting all new people. I felt that I wanted officers that had been through a couple of things. So I decided not to stay. They even offered me a commission and every other goddamn thing. I said, "No, I better go home." I had been gone since June of 1942, you know. I got home just around Christmas, I guess, of December 1944.

You had just reenlisted, though. You did reenlist while you were still in the Pacific?

Yes, that was in the sick bay at the hospital. The doctors swore me in. I asked them if I could reenlist.

When you came back to the United States, did you think that you'd had enough, or did you just want to rest for a while and go back again?

I wanted to go back. I would have stayed but old Deacon . . . there were a lot of people

that I was going to be missing. I think misery loves company, you know. We were getting a lot of replacements and a new battalion CO. And I was questioning things. Well, as it happened, on Okinawa the CO of my company got blown to smithereens; and the company commander and the first sergeant . . . everybody. It so happened that they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. I always wondered about that.

I went to Okinawa here a couple of months ago. Went to the areas where the companies were and looked at everything and tried to figure out . . . Somebody that's still living knows about this and that sort of thing. I hit two areas— I hit Okinawa and Peleliu. We walked the beaches in Peleliu. We had to find all this stuff first. We went up to the Bloody Nose Ridge and all these places. Five men from my company were there. We were there five days and it was just great. We really enjoyed it. This is the thing you paid on your own, you know. They were doing the same thing I was; finding out where. Because we had lost a hell of a lot of people. They were all gone. We talked about two officers we had, Gordon Maples and this French Canadian, First Lt. Fournier, and where they got killed and we knew where that happened . . . all that sort of thing, see?

Did you find where you were hit?

Yes.

How did that feel to be standing there?

We landed on beach White Two, I guess it was. I can't remember now. They were attempting to bust up the line. They had light tanks. None of our tanks [were there], or the rest was up forward. You know, it wasn't that easy. Of course, they had us bracketed with their big mortars and their artillery and they were blowing things out of the water.

I remember an incident. There was an Australian photographer on the beach. This is when we came in on our amtrac and everybody was getting out of there and spreading out, getting to the edge of the beachhead. He saw all of this going on and he gave his camera to a marine and said, "I'm getting the hell out of here, Yank. This is not for me." And he went back on one of the boats. [laughter] He was pretty smart.

Chesty Puller gave us this . . . every man got one of these . . .

A letter from your commander telling you that he appreciated what you had done and was sorry he wasn't going to be serving with you again?

The officers didn't like him but the troops did. They idolized this guy. Like I said, if you were in his outfit, not many of you were going to come back, you know. [laughter]

Where did they send you when you came back to the United States?

My father took ill when I was on leave. I was due to go back to the west coast. About ten days later he passed away. So I was assigned to a Naval Air Station at Floyd Bennett Field, New York.

What were your duties there?

I was in charge of the guard company—security.

You were stationed in the States when your father died in April of 1945. And then what happened?

Well, from there I wound up in Europe. I got orders on a Saturday night. It was the

same thing again. They needed somebody to go on this ship going to Europe. The war was over in May. I went on an APD to Europe to bring back our people. I made about four trips. So I did that.

You acted as an escort? You'd take prisoners from the United States, then you'd come back with American soldiers to the United States?

Yes, didn't back track anything. Took something over, brought something back.

What was your role?

It was security. The prisoners were our charge when they had them on the ship. They were under my control. As an example, we had a young *segundo teniente* Italian, and we brought him back. We were going to Italy . . . Bologna, I think it was. All the Italian POWs were spoiled in our country. They were all over in New Jersey somewhere. When we picked them up in Bayonne, they had nice suitcases. All the girls were screaming and hollering. They weren't actually POWs here. Anyway, they had no discipline.

The Germans were different. You tell one of those German officers what you want done, and it's done.

In the chow hall they served good chow, spaghetti and things. The Italian POWs were throwing it all in the GI can. I had to intercede. My men were armed with clubs. I had a PFC, he was a Polish boy and he was mad at everybody. [laughter] So I turned it over to him. "What I want you to do, I want you to take care of this matter. They're going to eat what they take and you'll be standing by." When we got down in their quarters, we clubbed a few people and it got the place cleaned up. But it took a little [intervention].

I got to see Europe. I had never been to Europe before in my life. That's one thing about the Marine Corps or Navy. I decided to make a career out of it because I liked [seeing places]. And I got to a lot of places.

Then I wound up in the 1st Special Marine Brigade, which was training. There was a possibility of somebody trying to take Martinique. I don't recall what it was. But anyhow, we were out on the ships, training, and carrying full units of fire.

When the bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, for most people it ended the war. But you had reenlisted the year before.

Yes.

You had another four years to go?

[I reenlisted to] 1948.

You didn't want to get out?

No. I had enough points, but I didn't want to get out. What in the hell was I going to do? Sheepshead Bay was not [the same] Sheepshead Bay. And I didn't know anybody.

There wasn't any place for you to go back to?

No.

You didn't have a job or a girlfriend in particular?

No. I played the field. I used to tell my mother, "If I didn't make enough money to buy a gal a fur coat, I couldn't get married." I used to tell these girls, "I can't even afford to buy you a fur coat. What do you want to get married for?" A smart ass, you know. But I had no ties or anything. I liked moving around. Home is where you hang your hat.

It sounds like even when they brought you off the front line, they'd give you maybe a week to recover, and then put you back in training again. The atmosphere had to have changed, though, after the war.

Well, they do that all the time. And 1946, I was out of the country again. I was down in the Caribbean and South America. We were a show of force.

They let the reserves go, this is July of 1946, so they can go home. The reserves were still on active duty. They disbanded this brigade I was in. I'm going on a ship to Guam. I get to Guam, I get pulled off the ship, and they send me to a place called Samar in the Philippines. They needed a first sergeant there. The others went to China. The 1st Marine Division went to China as soon as the war was over. A lot of things were going on then. And the Marines went to Japan for the occupation.

The Leyte-Samar area was the staging area for the invasion of Japan. I used to say they had everything there from national cash registers to baby diapers. We had about four hundred marines there. We had forty radio jeeps. We were on two islands and a causeway. Our job was to secure this stuff. We had, for instance, acres of jeeps. We had PT boats and all this stuff. They had the Office of Foreign Liquidation Corps there. All that stuff was going to China, Russia, Korea, whatever. Our responsibility was to see that nobody stole anything . . . except marines stealing to keep their jeeps going. We couldn't get any spare parts so we took everything that went to Russia. We stripped water pumps. [laughter] We were not supposed to do that but we did.

I got banged up in the Philippines, that's right. I wound up in the hospital. I had a fracture of the left femur. We had these elephant warehouses there, Quonset type huts. In one of them, we had morphine Syrettes

stored. We had a Philippine constabulary, a company of Philippine scouts, attached to us. We'd go out and do a little race. Well, anyhow, I got caught in the cross fire and the jeep overturned. I wound up in the Army Tenth General Hospital in Manila. I was there for nine months. It was a fracture. They tried to set it with the foot in the sling and all that and it didn't set, so they operated. I got a plate in there now.

From there I went back to Australia. I got leave. There was a girl down there that I had been going with. Of course, she had married this fellow who was a major in the Army. They were in Palembang, Sumatra. He worked for Standard Vacuum and Oil Company. I knew they were there.

She used to go visit her folks. Her father was the president of the gas works, they called it. It was like a power company here. And he was a TP, a reformed alcoholic. They always had strikes down there and it was hard to get beer. But, anyhow, he had two cases of these quart bottle of beers that I liked. I stayed at his house. I played the game of bowls and went to cricket matches. They were very nice to me. I was 118 pounds when I got down there. His son had a bicycle and I'd ride that bicycle to the village area; that's getting my exercise and all this other. That's what I needed.

From there they sent me back to the Philippines and I wound up in Guam. I was out in Guam about the time that the Berlin airlift was going on. Believe it or not, in 1948, on Guam, I was out with the fire chief one day. There was some smoke, so we took off and went out. I was armed because I was the JOD then. Anyway, we got out there and we run into two Japanese—fat and nice, clean haircuts. They had *Life* and *Look* magazines. They were being kept by some of the Chammaros. So I said, "Get your ass in the jeep." We took them back.

In 1948 you captured two Japanese?

Yes, I didn't draw any weapon on them or anything. I said, "Get in the jeep." They understood English.

When I got to Guam I was given an assignment of Charlie Company, which was a contingent up there in the hills. That's where the war crimes were going on, and the Marianna command was up there. We had one company up there of Marines who were guarding the Japanese POWs. We had the generals and the admirals. So that was my job there.

I checked in on a Sunday and the sergeant major said, "You're going to have a funeral tomorrow."

I got smart and I said, "Whose funeral?" [laughter]

Anyway, I didn't even know where the cemetery or anything was. [The funeral was for] a Guamanian who was the first Guamanian killed in World War II. They were bringing him back to bury him. Well, I had to get a chaplain. I had to go find out where the cemetery was. Of course the firing squad and all that was no problem because I had a company. I needed two buglers to play the echo taps, you know. I had to make a reconnaissance because I wanted to know where the hell everything was. I did alright, that first job.

When it was time for me to come back to the States, the Berlin Airlift was on. They put me on a cargo ship and I came in to southern California to a little place out there. I'm stationed at Long Beach Naval Base in the Los Angeles area. I reenlisted there. I put in for embassy duty but I didn't have enough time. I was sent to recruiters' school. I wound up in recruiters' school in Parris Island. Then I got orders back to San Francisco. And from San Francisco I came to Reno.

You spent most of 1940 until 1948 in the Pacific?

Out of the country

Then you ended up in Nevada and decided that you had found a place you liked?

What happened, the old man, the colonel in San Francisco, said, "I've been thinking of sending you to Reno." I didn't want to go because I was a bachelor. I didn't say anything, though. "When is your rent paid up?"

I said, "Friday."

Friday I was in Reno. I changed a lot of things here. I got involved with the university. Carol Lampke was the first Miss Nevada and Tosca Massini was the second one. I did the publicity for them. I got Marines from the Hawthorne Naval Ammunition depot. I did the open cars, convertibles, for the girls. And then Charlie Mapes did free rooms at the hotel for them.

One of the pictures you brought is a picture of you traveling around with a liberty bell in the parades and things like that. One of the pictures is with you and Governor Pittman in front of the capitol building in Carson City.

He was a nice gentleman.

As a recruiter, did you like the job of talking people into joining the Marines? Did you really believe in the Marines?

Well, I did some things. If a guy came in, and he was crummy, wearing a T-shirt in the summertime and needing a haircut, I'd say, "Well, I don't know if I can take you like that. You've got to square away a little bit. Why don't you go out and get a haircut and get a clean skivvy shirt and take a shower,

too. Shove off.” I never thought I’d see them again. I did that three or four times [to one guy]. I said, “You really want to be a Marine don’t you?”

“Yes sir!”

The Navy chief, he and I were in the same office together. He said, “I don’t want you to do what the Army and the Air Force does and promise everyone a desk job.”

I said, “Well, hell, the only thing they’re going to get out of me is a rifle.”

These people that came by the door—see the Korean War had already started and these were kids from the university—old Wayne would say, “You come see me, you get a swab. You go see the Marine, you get a rifle. Which one do you want to talk to?”

I had the Nevada Club and the Sierra Pacific running full page ads, ‘You want to fight, join the Marines,’ an ad with a man with a rifle. I got the Navy recruiter’s best man. I signed him up in the PLC program to go to Quantico to summer school and then get commissioned at the end, with a diploma. That was my job, publicity.

I made good friends here. I joined the Jay Cees here. Everybody that I tried to recruit, they had all been in World War II. So they recruited me. That’s where I got in all kinds of doors. I was the fourth vice-president, for publicity. I even got an award. I had a scrapbook for the Marine Corps. I had a scrapbook for the Jay Cees. [laughter] And we got a kind of award out of that. I met a lot of good people, and right from here, too.

GENEVIEVE “JIMMIE” HARROLD

Ken Adams: Let's begin with who you are, where you were born, when you were born, a description of your family and what your parents did, and your life growing up in Louisiana.

Genevieve G. Harold: My name is Genevieve G. Harrold. I was born in Livingston Parish, Louisiana. I was born January 1, 1920, in Louisiana. My mother had a home birth. And I grew up in Louisiana speaking French until I entered grade school.

What were your parents' names?

Edgar and Catherine Guitrau.

And you said your mother was also French?

My mother and father are both French, and their parents are French. They came from Switzerland in the early 1600s.

Oh, so they've been in Louisiana for a day or two.

Yes, a few . . . [laughter]

Does your family still live in Louisiana?

My parents are deceased, and all my grandparents are deceased. But I have a brother and sisters that live in Louisiana. We were a family of nine. I lost one brother; the rest of us are living and well.

So, the family tradition continues in Louisiana?

Oh, yes.

Do you go back for . . . ?

I go back once a year. I'm going back in October.

Are you the outsider to them, the one who . . . ?

I live the farthest away! [laughter] I'm called the matriarch since my mother died.

So you're in charge?



GENEVIEVE "JIMMIE" HARROLD,
USAF NURSE CORPS, 1943

Yes. They call me the general. [laughter]

Is that in deference to your military career, or your personality?

Oh, I don't know; they think I give too many orders.

What was going to school like?

We lived in a little country town in Louisiana, and we had to commute by bus, which was a eighteen-mile round trip.

What was the name of the town where you lived?

I lived in a town called Springville, but I went to school in a town called Springfield. That's where I graduated from high school. My parents moved from Springville to Springfield in the early forties, but I was gone by that time, away at school. So I never lived per se in Springfield. I just went on visits.

What kind of interests did you have when you were going to school?

Oh, I had a lot of interests, especially cooking, I should say. I liked the sports, but I was too tiny, I didn't weigh enough, and I didn't have the breath to play basketball. But I enjoyed cooking, and I still do. I'd get good grades in home ec, so to speak. And then my parents shipped me off to a women's college in northeast Louisiana. I went there for a year, and I hated it. I had always wanted to be a nurse, so when I came back they finally consented to let me go to nurse's training.

When you say you'd always wanted to be a nurse, how did you know that?

I had an aunt who was a nurse. And I admired her so. I used to visit her at the hospital as a child. My desire [to be a nurse] came from her. She was my idol.

What did your father do?

My father worked for the state. He was an assessor and an assessor tax collector and police juror—I don't know if they have those things now. But he worked for and retired from the state of Louisiana.

During the Depression, he was . . .

He was employed by the state.

Did you feel the Depression very strongly?

Very much so, we were poor. And my mother had one baby right after the other. I was the oldest, so in addition to going to school, I was a nursemaid and a cook. My father and I prepared all the meals for the hungry mouths, because my mother was pregnant all the time.

So you grew up cooking?

I grew up cooking.

And you liked it?

I love it.

What year did you graduate from high school?

I graduated in 1937, so I was seventeen.

And that was just called Springfield High School?

Yes.

And then the following year you went to . . . ?

Natchitoches, Louisiana. I think it was called Louisiana State Normal at that time. The name has since changed, and it's a co-ed institution now, but it was just ladies when I went there.

What did your mother want you to study?

I think they wanted me to be a home ec teacher or something. But I just hated it. It was my first time away from home, and I didn't want that. So the telephone bills were pretty high between college and my parents. They finally let me go to nurse's training.

Where did you go to nurse's training?

Our Lady of the Lake Hospital, now known as O.L.O.L. Regional Medical Center, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

How far was Baton Rouge from home?

About twenty-five miles.

So you were still away from home, but you could . . .

Yes, but my aunt was there. [laughter] My aunt was in the city of Baton Rouge, so I had family.

How long was nursing school?

Three years.

Up to this point in your life, you'd lived pretty sheltered; close to family; close to home; a small town, rural Louisiana kind of life.

Very much so . . . Very protected . . .

A big difference from what your life turned out to be?

Yes, I would say so.

You graduated from nurse's school in what year?

1942.

In June of 1942, or when was it?

I think we graduated in June, but we didn't take our state's board until September. After I had taken my boards and passed, and

received my diploma, then I went to work for this ear, nose, and throat doctor that I stayed with until 1943.

Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

Yes, I was working for the doctor.

Do you remember what you thought about it?

I don't remember. I just remember we were being bombed. What I was doing and where I was and how it affected me, I don't remember.

Do you remember anything about the atmosphere at the beginning of the war? What it was like? What everybody was doing?

Yes, everybody that I knew of, all the young men, were joining the services. And all of my nurse friends who had graduated and passed their boards were joining the services. The hospital was short of qualified people. They're the ones that really had to go out and recruit and stuff to have enough staffing to care for the people. And I decided that if all my friends were going, I was going to go, too. So I joined after I could not get an increase in pay with this doctor that I was working with.

This was the first time, with this doctor, you'd asked for a raise?

He wouldn't give it to me. And I then decided, well, if he won't . . . I was engaged to be married at that time and I broke it off, and that is when I decided to get out of town and join the service. So if I'd stayed in Louisiana and gotten married, God knows I wouldn't be here talking to you! [laughter]

You probably would have nine children!

Probably! [laughter]

You said you joined in 1943?

December 1, 1943. December 2, I left Baton Rouge for San Antonio, Texas. I took my oath of office the 1 of December 1943. And from there I went to basic training in the U.S. Army General Hospital, Fort Sam Houston.

What was basic training like for you? You'd trained as a nurse already, so that . . . ?

You learned how to set up a tent; how to operate in a tent; how to bivouac; how to walk with all the pack on your back—your personal items and your gear. And it wasn't easy.

How long was the training?

I think about six weeks.

I'm assuming you learned military rules.

[We learned] courtesy and rules and how to salute, how to wear the uniform, and all the ranks and how to address the ranks, and so on; protocol, so to speak.

And you learned something, probably, about the organization, which divisions and which . . . ?

Yes.

And probably some marching . . . ?

I learned how to march . . . which is left, which is front.

Did they give you any weapons training?

No, we had no weapons training. But we learned how to set up a hospital in a tent, how to put the litters together, how to work with minimal amount of equipment, how to care for different types of wounds, and how to store the equipment and pack the equipment and move it from A to B and wherever. And that, in essence, is just about what we did in basic training.

From basic training, I was sent to Longview, Texas, where the 173rd General Hospital was activated. There were people from all over the U.S. making up the personnel to operate this General Hospital. After extensive training we were sent on 21 January 1944 to Camp Polk, Louisiana, where we augmented the staff at all levels of operation in preparation to go overseas. Learning the paperwork, how to chart, etc., was quite a feat—so different from the civilian method. We continued to learn the Army way of doing things. We were there quite a while, from January to October, I think it was.

What did you do during this time?

They had a hospital at Camp Polk, and we were on military duty at the time. And we worked twelve-hour shifts with twelve hours off. At that point in time they were bringing back the wounded from Europe, and this was a destination hospital for those men from Texas and Louisiana and Mississippi. We learned how to take care of these patients the Army way, because we were going to do the same thing when we went to Europe.

Were you eager to go to Europe?

Yes, very much so. All of us were. And then, you know, you get your equipment [and are told] as to what you're going to take and how much you're permitted to take, and [you get]

your footlockers with your name stenciled on the footlockers and so on and so forth, in order to move. And we were transported October 18, 1944. So it was . . .

You went by ship from . . .

When we left Camp Polk to go overseas we went by troop train from Louisiana to Massachusetts. It was a very long, tiresome trip. This was a steam/coal operated train; it was sooty and dirty. There were many stops en route for food and other supplies. There were Pullmans in those days. Females were on two train cars, males were on the others. I remember we were in Cincinnati, Ohio, in late October, in the middle of the train yard. It was very cold, with dirty snow all over the area, but it was great being outdoors even for a little while.

We arrived in the United Kingdom on the 19th of November 1944.

Did you go by ship?

We went by ship from Massachusetts.

Do you remember what ship you took?

Yes, it was a U.S. *New Amsterdam*.

There are a couple ways people talk about the course of the trip. One is the zigzagging to avoid the German submarines, and the other is being escorted.

We were escorted.

What kind of equipment did you have?

To my knowledge, [we were on] Navy ships. To my knowledge, we did not zigzag,

so to speak, and I don't think we had airplane coverage until we left England to go to France.

Your whole hospital unit goes on that . . . ?

The whole hospital unit was on the train.

You're taking your equipment with you?

We're taking all of our equipment with us—our helmets, the whole nine yards, was with us on the train and the ship.

This was personal equipment. Did you have any hospital equipment, too?

No, just personal equipment. The hospital equipment went on a separate car from us. It seemed like it took days, but I don't remember how long it took. I do know that we sailed from Massachusetts on the 11 of November; I think it was that day.

You were commissioned when you first went in the service as a second lieutenant?

I was commissioned as a second lieutenant on entry to the Army.

So when you were in basic training, you were already commissioned.

I was commissioned.

That made it easier?

Yes.

Do you remember how many of you there were on the ship?

I know the approximate number of the staffing for the hospital. Now, there were

infantry troops and other troops on that same ship, but how many I don't know.

Did you have any contact with them?

Oh, yes.

The male officers got to talk to you and had some interaction. But from the enlisted men's side, you were a rare thing. There were few women on board, and the idea of getting the chance to talk to you . . . Did you feel that kind of attention?

I don't think so, because I had a lot of friends in the enlisted ranks, and I had a lot of friends in the officer rank. And aboard ship the men were having crap games on the deck, and the ladies would go join them. I didn't know how to play crap; I sure had to listen to them! And, yes, we interacted with the enlisted people as much as we were permitted to. But . . .

What was the atmosphere?

It was fun! They were very congenial, and I guess they looked to us like, "Well, we got to take care of these girls; it could be our sister, here, or my mother or whatever."

They couldn't have been nicer. Throughout my whole twenty-seven years, I've never had a problem with them.

The men are in the infantry or in the combat divisions and are going into one of the worst phases of the war.

Right.

They're looking at the worst winter of the war when they get there. You're not going into anything very pleasant.

Yes.

Was there any sense of apprehension and fear?

I think there was apprehension on both sides—the men and the ladies. We didn't know what we were getting into. I mean, this is a whole new ball game. We were trained as much as they could train us as to what to expect, but then you don't know until you get there how you're going to handle it.

In retrospect, was the training adequate?

I think for the time that we had, yes, I think it was adequate. But once you got into the nitty-gritty of it, you had to improvise because you didn't have the proper equipment that you were accustomed to. If you didn't have an IV stand to hang the IV solution on, you improvised. You hung it on a piece of string from the ceiling or something. People didn't tell us that, so we did the best we could, just to get it into the men.

Somebody the other day said that medicine was advanced a lot by both wars because, not only were you forced to find a new way to hang that, but doctors were forced to find a new way to set bones and to do whatever. I'm not a medical person. They improvised, and that became experimentation that advanced medicine. Did you see that, too?

Oh, yes, absolutely.

Do you remember how long the trip was from the United States to England?

Well, it was about nine days. We left the 11 of November, and we got to the U.K. on November 19. So how many days is that?

Eight days. And then how long were you in England before you went to . . . ?

Oh, we weren't there very long . . . maybe two weeks, three weeks at the most. I would say two weeks.

What did you do during that time?

Well, they had to get the ship ready. We had to wait. We were staging for the ship that was going to take us to France. And what did we do with that time? We were up to our knees in mud, and we didn't do anything, except take and give shots—you know, update our shots. They kept us busy, but I can't remember what we did, other than going to and from the little tent where we got our shots. And we went to many, many lectures as to what to look for and how to act if we met a German or whomever. I think that's what we spent our time on; listening to lectures and getting our shots and waiting for the ship.

And then when it finally came, we went to . . . let's see, where did we land? We landed at Le Havre, I think it was. Then we took ground transportation, and we went to Nancy, France, which was where the hospital that I told you about was; where the Germans had desecrated the building. It seemed like it took two or three days to get there by big trucks.

The hospital we were setting up was a building used by a former military school that the Germans took over. The layout was conducive for a hospital with barracks for billets, auditoriums for operating rooms, and the school administrative office became the CO's office.

The hospital didn't exist before, and you're setting it up? You said that a castle that you occupied, first had to be really cleaned up. That the Germans had destroyed the plumbing, and

cut off the water, and had left human waste all over. It all had to be rebuilt and cleaned up. And in the meantime you set up in tents and began operating. What area were you supporting? Where were the men coming from that you would be dealing with?

The Americans were taking Stuttgart at the time so we were getting casualties from that area—the men that were going up to Stuttgart to take Stuttgart.

I was at the hospital a short time in Nancy, then I was sent from this main hospital on temporary duty to one of the first evacuation hospitals in Arlon, Belgium. I was there because they were short of people, and we had to go in and relieve that crew that was there. They had to come back from R&R. You stayed so long in one of those hospitals, and then they would send you back.

How long did they . . . ?

Oh, I think we were there maybe six to eight weeks or something like that.

You were like the men on the line; after you'd been on that long, you needed some sleep, and you needed to get away from . . .

Right. You'd sort of rotate. One crew would be there six weeks, and the other crew would be at the hospital for six weeks.

And this hospital was dealing with . . .

Casualties from Bastogne, [Belgium].

This was a tent operation for a while. And then they moved to Arlon. The Americans got this castle, and it was a lovely, lovely building. And it had a lot of outbuildings, you know, for the laundry and this, that and the other, and the morgue and this, that and the other. It

was a huge, huge complex. The nurses were on the upper floor, I think it was. The offices, the headquarters, were down on the lower level. The nurses were housed upstairs.

My brother was overseas, and I hadn't seen him in three years. I remember this most distinctly. He was in Luxembourg at the time, and I was in Arlon. And somehow or other he found out where I was. I had just gotten off twelve-hour duty and I was in the process of taking my laundry downstairs to the laundry. And the runner came up and said that Miss Guitrau had a visitor. I couldn't figure it out . . . visitor, down here, who? I walked down the stairs, and my brother and I met in the middle of the stairs. It was quite a reunion, because I hadn't seen him in three years. He was an infantryman; he was with Patton.

Did you write to your parents?

Oh, I wrote to my parents about every other day. And my brother did the same thing. So what he couldn't tell then . . .

Where you were . . .

. . . where we were, but somehow or other he . . .

Maybe he just asked every time he was at the hospital if there was a nurse there.

I don't know; but he found me; and it was quite a reunion. [laughter] He never had any money. This was about eight o'clock in the morning. I had been working for twelve hours in the operating room. They hadn't eaten, and we, the nurse anesthetist and I, hadn't eaten breakfast. "Well, let's go eat breakfast."

Around the corner from the hospital there was a little bistro. And, of course, his buddy was with him. So we went and had breakfast,

and, of course, they ate breakfast and drank beer. And when it came time to pay the bill, Jimmie had to pay the bill because Brother didn't have any money!

What was your brother's name?

Edgar, Jr. We all called him Brother.

With nine kids in your family, how could you possibly call anybody just Brother? [laughter] Did everybody have a nickname?

No, come to think about it, we all went by our given names except me and my brother. I was the oldest, and he was next, you know. Oh, and I had one sister, and they called her Sissy. So three of us out of nine had nicknames.

But, anyway, old Jimmie ended up paying the bill. It was like that all of his life, Brother just never had any money. Jimmie picked up the tab, no matter where we were, until he died.

Whenever he got hungry, look for Jimmie?

Yes. [laughter] But anyway, it was fun.

We worked very hard. We worked twelve hour shifts. They'd be bringing these American soldiers, all beat, to Arlon; their guts hanging out, arm missing, you name it. And we did the best we could with what we had. It was a big, big, empty room, and we had about eight to twelve operating room tables with crews at [each] table.

What kind of things would you do?

I scrubbed and I saw that the instruments were sterilized. I saw that the room was set up properly. I saw that the patient was properly prepared, the best that we could. I cleaned up. I washed instruments, repacked them,

sterilized them, and got ready for the next one.

I remember one time we were operating, it was about two o'clock in the morning, and Mickey Rooney walked in. I think he was with the USO, or whatever, entertainment group. And he came in our operating room all masked and cracking jokes. The young man that we were working on was getting ready to go on anesthesia, and whether he knew Mickey Rooney, I don't know.

I take it by the way you said it, you didn't think it was funny, that you didn't think it was appropriate?

Well, it was funny, but I didn't think it was the proper thing to do, unless the patient was asleep. The operating room crew could handle it, but I didn't think that was Put yourself in that poor man's position. But Mickey Rooney was funny; he's still funny.

Did you make jokes and things while you were actually operating?

Not while the patient was awake. We were most professional.

But someone

Or we tried to be.

But some way or other, was humor a way that you dealt with the stress?

Yes. We had to. You'd go nuts if you didn't.

I take it, once you finish operating on one person

There was another one waiting to get on.

And for twelve hours . . .

They were lining up. You had litters on the floor—six and eight litters waiting to get to a table to be cared for. So you didn't have time to do much of anything. But if you let it get to you . . . Without a few jokes, reciting poetry, or doing something, you'd . . . it wasn't very relaxing if you didn't do that. And yet you had a job to do, and you did the best you could.

You were on twelve hours and off twelve hours?

No, we were on twelve hours and then we slept eight hours; then we went back on. We had eight hours between the twelve-hour shifts, as well as I can remember.

So in that eight hours, you had to get a couple meals in, get some sleep . . .

. . . get a bath, and do all the necessary things. Occasionally we had a day off.

By the time you get to your rotation, the end of your six or eight weeks before you rotate out, you must have been exhausted, and probably a little tense.

Yes.

That's hundreds of operations on people who were critically injured; otherwise, you wouldn't even be looking at them. That's not tonsillectomies or . . .

Oh, no. This was big stuff. When I left that unit and went back to the general hospital, they gave us a few days off, you know, to rest up and get your clothes in order and get a bath and get your laundry done and get your uniform cleaned. I would say they gave us about three days, four days, before we went

back on general duty in the hospital. There we still worked, but we were not on twelve-hour shifts; we worked an eight-hour shift. And you know . . .

When you did get a break, after you've taken a bath and done your laundry, what did you do?

Well, we had our hair done. [laughter] If we could find a beauty shop, we had ours done, which was a treat after bathing in a helmet and washing your hair in helmet. And then we did a little bit of sightseeing. Of course, we were all single at the time, and we dated and went to dinner and dancing. In Nancy they had a lovely hotel, it was just a magnificent hotel, and I can imagine, before the war, it was first-class with the silver and the napery and everything. The food was divine. It turned out to be the officers' mess, so we would go there with our dates. They had an orchestra. We danced and tried to do what you normally do in your everyday life.

Did you date men from hospital units, or did you date . . . ?

I dated fighter pilots, and others.

Fighter pilots?

They were the most exciting.

With the men, the companionship was always a symbol of one of the ways to break the tension of war. If they could just be with a woman for a little while, it kind of got them out of the war. Did women look at it the same way?

Yes. I remember it was Mother's Day. And a few days before Mother's Day, three of us girls that ran around together, we were all dating pilots from the same squadron. By this

time the Americans had taken Stuttgart, and we had an air strip at Stuttgart. These pilots were stationed at Stuttgart. So we decided that we wanted to go to Stuttgart to see them. We had the time off. Well, we hitched a ride in a two-and-a-half-ton truck that was taking supplies to Stuttgart. We left at the break of dawn or the middle of the night or something. Anyway, it's about an eight to ten hour drive. And the roads were all beat up; you had to detour around holes and this, that, and the other. So we finally got to Stuttgart. In the meantime the men had found us billets in a German residence. And the three of us ladies stayed in this one particular German's quarters. I had never seen a featherbed before. And it was dreadfully cold. So we were billeted there and slept there in this home. And then we went to their mess for our food and saw what we could of Stuttgart. Stuttgart had a Mercedes factory, I think, at that time, and that's where the Luftwaffe airplanes were built, or something. I can't remember.

But anyway, it was a big industrial city, and we did get to see as much as we could. But then the weather moved in, and we had to get back to Nancy, and there wasn't a truck available. So how did we get back to Nancy? There was a train in a little town. I don't know where it was or the name of the town. The boys took us to this town to take the train to Nancy. Well, the train was a milk run, and it took forever and a day to get to Nancy.

Milk run meaning it stopped at every little place?

[It stopped at] every little place, and then they had to repair the tracks and this, that and the other.

It was Mother's Day, and we were a day late getting back on duty. And there were no phones that we could call in. I remember we

got in and got to the train station, and there was a flower shop there. It had an orchid in the flower shop. So we decided that we would buy this orchid for our chief nurse. We really expected the worst because we were AWOL one day.

We walked into our quarters, and everybody says, "The chief wants to see you as soon as you get there. The CO wants to see you."

One of the girls had a bottle of champagne in her locker, and we had the orchid, and we took ourselves down to the chief nurse's office and apologized for being late, and then told why. And we gave her the orchid, and we gave her the champagne, and she invited us to have a drink of the champagne with her. Then she took care of the commanding officer, and we got back scot-free. So that was one episode!

What rank was she?

I think she was a major.

Were you still a second lieutenant?

I made first lieutenant over there. But, then, our commanding officer was most understanding. He really was; he was a swell man.

You weren't afraid of being with thousands of men riding in trucks?

They took care of us just like we were their sisters. We were never terrified. We never had any unhappy experiences with any of them.

I've never heard a woman tell a leave story or a pass story. In the men's cases, they didn't think about how they were going to get back, only how to get to wherever they were going to go. And only when they finished having whatever fun

they were having, did they ever think about how they were going to get home. Did the women do it the same way—total abandonment? “We’re going to go see these men.” Is that as far as you thought about it?

We knew we had to get back, but we didn’t know how. [laughter] But we got back. I guess the guys sort of had a plan; if the supply truck didn’t make it through, then we could come back on the train. I think that that’s what we were told once we got there, “Now, if the truck doesn’t come with the supplies, you’re going to have to go back on the train. And the train leaves on this day at this time.” I guess in the background, we knew that was our second option.

How did you communicate with them? Did you write letters to them, or did you have a faster way of communicating with your pilots?

No, they’d fly on a mission, then they’d buzz the hospital. Well, we’d [talk] on the telephone, too.

You said the first hospital that you were at, you were supporting the men who were strafing and bombing Stuttgart. So is that where you met these guys?

I think they came on an R&R to Nancy, and we met them there at the officers’ club. In fact, I know that’s where we met.

So the officers’ club served as kind of a meeting place?

Yes.

The men sometimes drank a lot. The nurse’s life resembles that of a pilot somewhat. I mean she’s reasonably secure; she’s not going

to get bombed in her bed. She’s threatened, but reasonably secure. But when you’re on a line, you’re in terribly stressful circumstances. Were the nurses as prone to drinking?

I don’t think we consumed the amount of liquor that the men did. We were under stress, but not as much as them. We indulged in cocktails and drinking, but I don’t think that we . . .

Your drinking was no different than before the war, just kind of social drinking?

I know my drinking habits didn’t change. I don’t remember any of the nurses. We were all very young, and we didn’t know what liquor was. We knew what it could do, but I don’t think any of us ever became alcoholics or indulged too much, that I know of.

Hospitals also have access to drugs.

Yes, they have . . .

Did they use drugs?

We didn’t . . . no. I had some experience after the war in the sixties with nurses that were on the drug route, but during the war, no, I don’t remember anybody using the drugs.

Why do you think . . . ?

I think the control of the drugs was different during the war than it is now. You had to account for everything. And you still do. They were strict then, and I think it’s more lenient now than it was then. I could be wrong, but I think so. I don’t know.

What was the food like in the hospital?

Hospital food.

Well, for the front-line guys, hospital food looked pretty good.

Oh, it was all right, you know. Army mess had good food, and they had bad food. We had lots of powdered eggs, and we had lots of Spam. I cannot look at Spam in the face—it's] full of fat. Of course, the diet then was a hell of a lot different than it is now. You had dehydrated potatoes; you had dehydrated eggs—everything was dehydrated unless the procurement officer could buy fresh vegetables from someplace. Occasionally we had fresh vegetables. But everything was dehydrated. We didn't starve to death by any means.

You brought up an interesting point about high-fat diets. In the circumstance, in the winter, in a war, for most people, was the high-fat diet more of a benefit than it was a . . . ? Now we think about that as being poor health, but under the circumstances . . .

You had no choice. In order to survive, you had to eat. I met a French lady, we were guests at her home. This was at a later date than I'm speaking of now. I was dating the officer in charge of the mess of the hospital. And we were invited to this lady's home. She was an American married to a Frenchman. And we took the potatoes and some other food, and she supplied the rest. But they hadn't had a good potato in a long . . . We had russet potatoes so we took the potatoes over there. She was going to make mashed potatoes. And I was peeling the potatoes, getting ready to wrap the peelings in the newspaper to destroy them, and she would not let me destroy those peelings of those potatoes.

She said, "That is where all of your protein is." I had already scrubbed the potatoes. "Take those potato peelings and put them in a pot. And that's going to be the basis for your soup."

And I'll never forget that. I don't throw potato peelings away anymore.

You spoke French as a child. Did you speak French during the war?

I could converse with them, yes.

Because you must have had lots of opportunities . . .

Yes, I did.

. . . to usefully use your French.

I did.

And I would think you would have been popular with the other officers?

I could make myself understood, and I could understand them if they spoke slowly. But if they rattle it off, I'm lost. But if they spoke slowly, I could understand them. Of course, my French had deteriorated quite a bit by that time. But, you know, I could make myself understood as to what I wanted. The girls used to like to go sightseeing with me because I could make people understand what we wanted. It was quite an experience. I don't regret a minute of it.

Did you pay much attention to the French civilians?

Yes, we did, and they were very gracious. We weren't there long enough to become really acquainted with them. I mean,

we moved so, and our hours were so different. You didn't have time to work up a relationship with any of them. But they were kind to us, and we were kind to them. They were the maids of the big building and they did the housework in our quarters. We were kind to them. If we had clothing that we didn't want anymore, or a nightgown we couldn't wear or didn't want, we'd give it to them, because they were extremely poor and short of food and fuel. They were short of everything. We did the best we could in helping those people that helped us.

Cigarettes were a major form of barter, among other things.

Yes.

Did you have . . . ?

No, I didn't smoke, so I wasn't involved in the cigarette aspect of it.

And you didn't take cigarettes and sell them?

Oh, no, no. I couldn't be bothered; it was a waste of time for me. [laughter]

After the battle of Bastogne, then you went to . . .

I came back to Nancy.

That's a general hospital, right?

That's a general hospital. After the war ended in 1945, we went to Marseille, France, to stage going to Japan. We went in July of 1945 to Marseille to get ready to go to Japan. We were in the staging area, the war ended in Japan, and we didn't go. So we got on a

ship and came back to the United States. We came back to the States in the fall of 1945; I don't remember the exact date.

You went back to the general hospital after V-E Day? When did you go back, do you remember?

No. Our hospital was going to go to Japan, so the whole hospital moved to Marseille to stage. The war ended and the whole hospital came back to the United States.

But in the period between May and July . . . ?

We were still working, yes.

The pace had slowed down a little, though.

Oh, yes. The pace had slowed down quite a bit. And then we [had] to pack all that hospital to get ready to go to Japan. Everything had to be packed, so we helped with the packing. I'm an operating nurse at that point in time, so I had to help the crews to pack all of the instruments and this, that and the other, to go to Japan. And then we get on a train to go to Marseille.

When V-E Day came, do you remember what you did, and do you remember the atmosphere in Europe when the war's over?

It just felt like a big load had lifted off your shoulders, and that you were so glad that it was over, and that you could converse and relax. You didn't have to be so careful as to what you said and how you said it, to people not associated with the military. Everything was just happy and easy flowing.

Now, what did I do on V-E Day? I honestly don't remember. But I do know it was just like a big load had lifted. And where was I? I

don't know. I know I was in Paris on an R&R during that period, but I don't know if it was before or after V-E Day. The 15 of May I went for a forty-eight-hour leave to Paris. That was before the war ended, because I was in Paris before the war ended. I was promoted to first lieutenant the 23 of June of 1945. And the 4 of July we went down to Marseille. I got sick somewhere along the way here, and I ended up in the hospital. They gave me a flu shot, and it damn near killed me. I was in the hospital for three days, I was *really* allergic to the vaccine. I haven't had a flu shot since, till last year.

You're getting ready to go to Japan at this point. Did you think you were going to be going to Japan?

Yes, we thought we were all going to Japan, but the war ended. So they got a ship, *U.S.S. Washington*. We got on the ship in Marseille, then came back to the U.S.

What did you feel like when you heard about the bomb?

I thought it was the best thing in the world that ever happened.

You were just really glad not to be going to Japan . . .

Oh, yes.

. . . and really glad the war was over?

Yes. And the U.S. could get back to living again.

What were your plans at that point when the war was over? What did you think you were going to be doing?

What was I going to be doing? I had no idea what I wanted to do. I took . . .

You're still a pretty, young girl; you're twenty-five or twenty-six years old, and . . .

I don't think I was that old. In 1945, what was I?

Twenty-five.

I was twenty-five. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I was encouraged to go back to college and get my degree.

I was assigned to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and from there I went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. I was still in the service. In the meantime, I had some leave coming, and after the war, I went back home. My brother was home.

Only the two of you served in the . . . ?

Yes. But my brother got out of the service and I stayed in, until 1947. And then I got out for a while. I came back in, in 1949.

You were out two years.

Almost two years . . . That's when I decided, after I had gotten out, that I wanted a military career. I knew that I wanted to stay with the military. I had a taste of going back to civilian duty, and I didn't like it, because of the pay for number one. You did the same thing you did when you were a student, working your hide off and not getting paid for it. So I went back to the military.

Did the officer status make a difference? Everybody recognized that you were saving their life . . .

Oh, yes.

And the level of respect when you got back to civilian life to be some doctor's nurse is . . .

Well, they looked at you as if to say, "Where in the hell have you been? We don't do things this way. You can't do it this way." I'm talking about those nurses and physicians who had no dealings with the military during this period.

And you always asked, "Why not? We did it in the service. Why can't we do it here?" And I think at that point in time, they listened to us if we could accomplish the same thing in a better way in a shorter period of time.

Compared to a civilian doctor, you saw more in fourteen months in Europe than they would have seen in their entire careers. You saw more operations. You saw more variety in traumatic injuries—maybe not in other health issues—than they saw in their whole life. Do you think that was intimidating to them?

I don't know; it could have been. I don't have any idea. The physicians that I had dealings with during that period of time, I never had dealings with them again because they all got out of the service and went into private practice. I never did see, you know. We all went our own separate ways and did our own thing. Well, I had some dealings—verbally, letters, and this, that and the other—with some of my cohort physicians *after* the war and after they got out of the military. I got to know their wives and their families and stuff like that. But, you know, you move so frequently, you lose contact with them all. So some of them went on to do whatever they wanted to do. I think that they gained quite a bit by the experience in the Army. I think if you speak to those people, they will agree

with that statement. Every one of us, from the lowest PFC to the highest ranking, we all learned.

Did you maintain your friendship with any of the other women?

Yes. I still do. I met this girl in 1943, and I was her maid of honor when she got married in 1956, and she was my maid of honor when I got married in 1967. And she lives in Vacaville and I live here, and we correspond, and we see one another. She's the only one [I keep in touch with].

Is the war an important bond in your friendship?

I don't think so. Yes, it played a great deal in it, because she knew my family and I knew her family. She's from Chicago, and I'm from the South. She visited my family and I visited hers. We were very compatible and very nice friends. Where you saw one, you usually saw the other. A lot of people said we were lesbians, but neither one of us was a lesbian. We were dating and having fun and getting married and this, that and the other. But, no, we were not lesbians. [laughter] There were some that were lesbians.

That's something that I've never heard anybody say anything about in the Second World War. Well, it's just not something that was very commonly talked about.

No, it was, as you say, uncommon. But they were there—just like the men. But you didn't make an issue of it. And neither did they display any affection for themselves in front of other people. But we knew who they were, and, you know, you treated them just like you treated Joe Blow. They were nice ladies, but they didn't like men.

Did you ever have any occasion to treat any German prisoners?

Yes. They were brought into our hospital, and we took care of their wounds. After we treated them, I don't know where they went. They went to a POW camp, I assume; I don't know. But they weren't very nice.

They weren't nice, even though you were . . . ?

No. Of course, we didn't know what the hell they were saying; they were speaking German. But some of them, I guess . . . all I remember about the Germans is their blue eyes. They had the bluest eyes and the fairest skin and hair. And they were *big* men, SS troops. You've read about the SS—the physique and this, that and the other. And they were mean, some of them. Now, I'm sure they felt we were bitches, but who cares. We took care of them, and we were nice to them, because we wanted them to be nice to our boys. But I didn't have any dealings with them. Once they left the operating room table, that was the end of the game; I didn't see them anymore.

You pretty much treated everyone and anyone that came across the table?

Anyone that came that needed treated, we treated them; regardless of color, anything, we treated them.

Did you end up operating on black American soldiers?

Yes. Not very many, but they were there.

There were outfits of Japanese Americans.

I don't remember any.

Didn't see any?

I don't remember seeing any of them.

It was hard work; it was depressing work, but it was also gratifying, and I enjoyed it. I didn't enjoy seeing the wounded, by any means, but I was very happy to have had that experience and I learned so much. If people ask me today, would I do it again? Absolutely, no questions asked.

Including being in a combat zone and . . . ?

Anything they want me to do, I'll do it. I'm just so pro-military that whatever they do, I think is OK. As far as war is concerned, I think . . . yes, there are some things that they do that I don't approve of, but that's life.

And the war itself . . . there was never any question in your mind whether we were doing what had to be done?

Never. We had to do what we did. Don't you agree?

One of the things that I'm interested in is post war adjustment in people. You did get out in the civilian life, and you went back in. And with the men, oftentimes, they came back to a world that was semi-hostile to them. The world didn't really want to hear their war stories. My mother says that women just said, "We don't care about any of that. We just want you to get a job. We want to buy a house and a car."

And that the men went from being officers or men who were making important contributions to people who were clerks or who were doing lesser jobs with less respect. The combination of having been in a very stressful, violent world and coming back to a totally non-violent one, and the change in the level of contribution and importance of their work, made some people

pretty angry and it made the adjustment period difficult. You were doing something that was very, very important. You never questioned whether what you were doing was important. You never questioned your own role. You got respect from everyone for what you did. Civilian life didn't have any of that. And then you take away the rush, the excitement, the intensity of the experience and you go to, "Well, what are we going to listen to on the radio or watch on television?" I mean, it's so boring and so dull by comparison. Did you have any of those feelings?

When I first got back?

Yes.

Yes I did. I worked in a Catholic hospital. That was where I graduated from, a Catholic hospital, and I went back to the Catholic hospital when I got out of the Army. Yes, they sort of looked down their nose at you, if you know what I mean. Just like I said before, there was something about them. They acted like they didn't trust you to do whatever you had to do. It sort of made you feel unwanted. They didn't care whether you liked it or didn't like it. That's the impression that I got. But I didn't stick around long enough to put up with that feeling very long, because that's when I went back to the military. But yes, the women did feel that way just like the men did.

You were a pretty independent person by this point.

Oh yes.

Did the military make you feel that way? Would you have been that way anyway?

I think I would have been that way, anyway, because being the oldest of nine kids, I had to be pretty independent. I mean, I had a lot of people depending on me so I had to make decisions on my own at a young age. So, you know, if sister Susie Q didn't do this, it was my responsibility to see that she did what she was told. In a way I guess that made me a little more independent than other people.

I have always been independent, even as a child growing up, you know. I wanted my way and I did it my way. And in the military, of course, you had to do what they tell you to do, or you bend the rules a little bit. But I've always been independent, and [became] more so during my military career. I had to make my own decision whether I wanted to buy an Oldsmobile versus a Ford or a Chevrolet. Where was I going to get the money for it? I wanted a Cadillac but I had a beer pocketbook instead of a champagne [pocketbook]. But I also bought that Cadillac—I didn't have a pot to pee in, but I did [it]. I took chances, let's face it. [laughter] But I guess I did all right, don't you think so?

Were you good because the military gave you some experiences and some opportunities that made you good? Or were you good in the military because you brought into it the Depression and some other very critical experiences that made you good and that helped you be better in civilian life?

I don't think the military was *the* thing that made me independent. I think it was my upbringing and, as you said, the Depression and what I had to do as a youngster. To get where I wanted to be was difficult. And you know, my parents did a lot of sacrificing for me to send me to school, and I felt that I had to be the best I could be with the opportunities

that they gave me. It wasn't much, but I think I gained from it all.

I think the military enhanced that for me a great deal, those traits, because my parents were very strict . . . very strict. "You can't do this or you do it this way," and I followed those [rules]. I had no problems [with] military regimentation or rules. I had no problems with it at all. It fit in my life nicely, but there were some ladies who couldn't hack it. They didn't like being told when you had to be in, and when you could get up, and oh, you had to do this at this such and such time. It didn't bother me. I did it.

And I think to be what I had to be, I did, as Frank Sinatra said, "I did it my way." Sure there were difficult times. There were difficult times for me in the military and there were difficult times for me in nurses training.

I remember being a student in the operating room as a student nurse. I had a sister (a nun) over me and boy, I'll tell you! She was my aunt's roommate in the convent. She expected me to be the student that my aunt was. Well, I was not the student that my aunt was. I could never be the student that my aunt was. But she expected it of me. So we didn't gee-haw too much. She's still alive. When I see her, I guess now she realizes that nobody's alike. I mean two people can't be alike. My aunt was a brain and I wasn't a brain. And she couldn't understand why I couldn't be a brain. [laughter] Maybe because I didn't apply myself the way my aunt did. I don't know.

I'm pleased with what I have done in my life in the military. I don't have much civilian working experience, you know, just that year as a student, then the year working for that doctor, and then the year working in the hospital after I got out and before I joined the Air Force. And that's all the civilian experience that I have.

After you retired you just stayed retired?

After I retired in 1970 we lived on our boat for a while and then we moved to Coronado, California. We bought a house. Well, after I fixed the house the way I wanted it, I had time on my hands. I was bored stiff so I started looking for a job. I did not want to go back into nursing care, so I answered an ad in the paper. They were looking for a nurse to set up temporary medical service personnel. I answered the ad and I went over and I got the job. I set up the program for this agency for temporary medical service personnel. I dealt primarily with RNs but there were some LPNs and some corpsmen, you know, that wanted to work on a temporary basis. I set the program up. I interviewed them. I worked for about six months to set the programs up. Then we bought the motor home and we decided to go, so that was the end of the work. I haven't worked since.

But that was it. That was a fun thing to do because I had never done that, but I knew I could do it. I knew what I was looking for. And I got pretty good pay. I could have gotten more. Stupid me, I didn't ask for more. [laughter] That's what I did.

Do you think your generation made a larger contribution to the world than most others? I've heard a lot of people say that of the generation that came out of the Second World War, lots of them went to school on the GI Bill, a much higher percentage than ever would have before. And they came out motivated, and with a lot of discipline.

I agree with that statement wholeheartedly. A lot of the nurses went back and got their PhD's. They would not have been able to get their PhD's if they hadn't had

that GI Bill. They wouldn't have got their M.S. or whatever they wanted to do. I had a friend that went back, she got her BSN and her masters, and she went back to be an attorney, all under the GI Bill. Yes, I think that the World War II personnel contributed a lot . . . and did a lot, post-war. Don't you agree?

Yes, absolutely. Do you have any other experiences that you can recall from the war period that would help people understand what it was like?

All I can tell you is, we worked very hard, but we played very hard, too. We played very hard but we worked very hard and we enjoyed what we . . . When I use the word "enjoy," I mean we did what we loved best, which was taking care of people. And we had the opportunity to do it. We would not have had that opportunity to see what we saw if it hadn't been for the war. [We would not have had those experiences] in an average U.S. hospital. I think World War II advanced medicine tremendously. I think the stats will prove that.

Did you see anything specific that you think advanced medicine?

I can't recall anything specifically from World War II, except that you utilize whatever . . . If you ran out of plaster, for instance, to put a caste on a patient, you didn't sit around . . . you had to improvise to put that leg in a caste or whatever it was that had to go in a caste. You used a piece of board. You used whatever was available to take care of that particular problem. And you used maybe less plaster than you would if you were in a civilian hospital or stateside facility to make that plaster last.

Penicillin came out during World War II. We had to sign for penicillin just as you do for your narcotics. It all had to be accounted for. Now you don't have to do that for antibiotics. But at that point and time you did. The medicines didn't get to us always on time. We ran out of penicillin. [We] ran out of caste material. So there was a shortage of supply but it didn't last very long, eventually you got it. The ships didn't come in; [they were] blown up or something, you know.

I think the greatest contribution that I can see which occurred in World War II is the ability to air evac people from the front line to the back and care for their wounds. And it came into play during the Korean War, which is the war that I flew in and picked up the patients. That, to me, is the most [important] advance . . . to carry them, picking them up and bringing them back, and care for them at a faster pace than it would be if you didn't have the air evac.

Was World War II where you started the stage treatment; where they gave some immediate field treatment, took some to field hospitals, and evacuated some to the General Hospital depending on their condition?

Yes, we triaged them. Those that you knew you could save you took care of first. And then those that you . . . well, you know what triage is. You and the doctor make the decision, "This one is going to be taken care of first. This one is too far gone. We'll do the best we can for him." You know, we had priorities.

And the third category of people, there was nothing you could do for them?

Yes, but we made them comfortable. We didn't attempt methods like you do now. You

get a big airplane crash, you do the same thing with the crash.

And is that something that developed out of World War II?

Yes.

That under pressure somebody had to make the decision?

Somebody had to make the decision. You can't take care of all of them, you got to take care of the ones that you can save. And I think when you had that airline crash here several years ago—we weren't here—but they did the same thing then. They triaged. And any airline crashes that you have around, they would triage them. You have a big crash on the Navy base here, they'll triage it. And you take care of those that you can save before you do one that you know is hopeless. You would make that person comfortable but you won't do any

The only picture I have of this is the M.A.S.H. kind of stuff. Did you get them in big groups like that?

Yes. It would be nothing for a big truck or a field ambulance . . . you've seen a field ambulance. You can put three litters on one side and three on the other and you had one litter on the floor. That's seven litters. Well, you have, say, six ambulances come in with seven patients each and you don't have much room. You just put the litters on the floor. The ambulance turns around and goes back and gets some more. So it would be nothing to have fourteen, twenty-five, thirty litters here.

You've got a team of nurses and doctors that do the triaging. And you have your staff in the operating room doing what they can

do, getting ready, or they have somebody on [the operating table]. They're going to take the ones . . . they take their turns.

Did you work with the triage staff?

I didn't have too much to do with the triage. I was primarily [in the] operating room.

Somebody had already made the decision. The first priority are the ones that we can do something about right now, and that's the ones you get?

That's the ones that we got.

And the ones that weren't too badly injured?

They made them comfortable.

You didn't see those?

I didn't see those, no.

And the ones that you saw, when you finished with them, they'd be . . .

When we finished with them they went back to war or to a place where there was an around the clock medical service, [where] personnel and staff were taking care of them. Now, those that required more than what we could do . . . Say for instance you've got a tendon severed. Well, depending on the training of that physician, he did the best he could to take care of that tendon but that man is going to need more surgery on that tendon. So those are the people that were air evacuated back for more surgery.

And then those are the ones that you'd see later back in the general hospital where you were?

Yes, correct. And if they weren't wounded and they could recuperate and go back on duty in a certain period of time, they got well in the hospital and they weren't sent back to the States. Those people we could take care of, and they went back to duty in a certain length of time.

And sometimes men were in the hospital three to six months?

Oh yes.

Then there were regional hospitals in the United States, so if they had to be sent back to the United States for hospitalization they were sent to the region where they lived?

Correct. They had seven regions of the U.S. and each of the seven regions has regional hospitals like McCord in Washington and Southern California in San Francisco. They had regional hospitals there for those men from the western U.S. I don't think Nevada had a regional hospital during the war, but I knew that Washington did. California had Letterman and I think San Diego had the Navy [hospital]. And Texas had two of them . . . I don't know where they were. It's been so long ago.

You still have regional hospitals. Lackland Air Force Base, for instance, is a regional hospital. That's a teaching institution. It's mammoth. You have men doing their residency on all disciplines there. The same thing with nurses. You have all of the disciplines at that institution. The same way with Balboa, which they want to close. Letterman was the same way. The physicians went there and did all their requirements for whatever they wanted to do—plastic surgery, you name it, they did it.

Things like plastic surgery didn't exist anywhere in Europe. You didn't deal with cosmetic issues at all, did you, during the war?

Oh no. Those came back to the States. And the same way with the Korean War, which I was in. I mean, I wasn't in Korea but I took care of those patients. And that's where air evac really came into play, more so. We had air evac during World War II, but the Korean War is where we really, really, really utilized air evac, very, very, very well. And [during] the Vietnam War, of course.

In Korea, that's what you did?

Yes, we picked them up. I didn't go to Korea to pick them up. They were moved to Japan and we picked them up there and brought them back. We had them back in the States within thirty-six hours after they were wounded. That's pretty rapid.

You said you used a C-54 for that?

We did, yes, until they modified the C-97 and made the C-97 the air evac ship. I brought the first modified C-97 from Hickem to Travis with a load of patients. And on that trip we had an iron lung patient. I had a picture of that. But it was a super aircraft. From that they went to 171, 271, or something like that; I don't know the number of the airplane. I was out of the game by then. I flew air evac for three years, which is unusual. Most of the ladies only go about two years.

But, you know, [in the] Korean War, we brought back POWs. First ones that were released out of the Korean War, we picked them up.

What was that like?

I didn't do it, but my squadron did. Oh, they got the good treatment.

Did you see any in Europe? Did you see Americans who had been prisoners of war?

No, but after the war I met some POWs. My friend married a POW. They live in Washington State. He was a POW at Stalag . . . But I, you know, met them; I don't know them.

Did you meet anybody from any of the concentration camps?

No, I didn't. Unfortunately, I never went back to Europe to see those concentration camps. I've been back to Europe but I did not go to see those places, and I'm very sorry I didn't do it. Someday I hope to go back.

Did you know about them during the war?

Oh yes. Well we, like everybody else, read about it but we didn't believe it. But I did not see any of those people. I have since met some people whose families were POWs and in concentration camps. I personally, no, I did not [meet any of them].

Did you have strong feelings about the Germans, about the German Army? Did you personify the war in any way?

I think they were all brainwashed, don't you? I think Hitler brainwashed the whole country.

At the time did you . . . ?

Yes, I thought Hitler was nuts. In fact, it proved that he was nuts. And I think that most of the young people that joined the Brown Shirts or whatever you want to call them, they

were indoctrinated in that method of control. I think the people were taken advantage of. I don't think all the Germans were that way. In fact, I know they weren't. I have a German friend, she's here in Reno and she's sixty-three, and they were anti-Hitler. And she said they went to garbage cans, they went everywhere to find food to eat, because of Hitler. She's German and she just thinks it's just horrible the way that the Germans were treated that didn't believe in Hitler. She's my manicurist, a nice lady.

A common theme I hear, is after the war people forgave the Germans pretty easily. The war's over, shake hands, and go on with the future. But we struggled more with Japan and the animosity toward Japan as a country and all the people in it. Did you have any feelings like that?

I did about Japan. I think those of us who had that feeling about Japan were upset because Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Germany didn't bomb the U.S., they bombed other peoples. The way I look at it is we took care, or tried to take care, of the other people [that] were taken advantage of. But the Japanese took advantage of the U.S. and I think that most of us in my era had the feeling that you describe, the animosity toward them. And yet, I know some Japanese people who thought the way the Germans did [that were] anti-Hitler, and they were anti-those people in charge of the government of Japan. I don't think every Japanese is bad, nor do I think every German is bad. But those people who started the war were bad.

Were you angry at them during the war?

I was angry at the Japanese, but I don't think I was as angry at Germany until I found out about the holocaust.

You probably didn't find out until it was over.

I was angry with Germany for the way they desecrated buildings and the arts and the cities, and how they treated their people. I had read stories in novels and writings about Germany and how they treated their people. It makes me sad and it makes me angry to know that there are people in the world that can treat their fellow man the way they were treated. And I'm angry because there's no need for it. God didn't put us on earth to be mad at everybody. And I think it's sad that we can't get along amongst ourselves better than we are now; the blacks against the whites, the Asians, the Mexicans, the Negroes and this that and the other. I think that's sad, don't you?

It can certainly be threatening sometimes.

It is and it's sad to see. Like the gangs . . . I think that's so sad to see the gangs killing one another the way they are, not only here in Reno, but all other the U.S. Why can't they learn to live with one another? What makes them that way? Is it drugs? Is it the inability to accept anyone of different color?

We had a colored lady living with us when we were little. I must have been about seven years old, I think it was. And my parents got this Negro lady to come live with us. Now, she brought us up. She bathed us; she fed us; she taught us. And when she'd have her days off my daddy used to take her in the car and take her to her residence, and we'd get out of the car and go play with all these little colored people. We never had any animosities against the Negroes. I wasn't brought up that way. They were our friends. They still are our friends. And in the service you had Negro nurses, you had Negro doctors, you had Negro corpsmen, LPNs, and you worked with them. That doesn't mean that you're going

to go out and shack up with them or marry them but, my God, you get along with them. You treat them as human beings for goodness sakes. Just because they're different colors don't mean they don't have feelings and think the way we do. I'm against all this anti-colors, anti-race. I just think it's unnecessary.

Do you think that the way you feel made you want to be a nurse? Or do you think being a nurse, particularly in those kinds of circumstances where you have to treat whoever comes across your table and you have to treat them the same way, taught you to feel that way?

[I] treat them alike. They're human beings. Color didn't mean a thing.

Did you ever have any French civilians or German civilians that you operated on?

I don't think so, no.

There must have been some French civilians . . .

I think there were; it could have been a French or it could have been a German, but I don't remember them. I do remember one German but I think we just put a caste on. He had a broken leg or an arm or something. He wasn't seriously injured. We took care of him and he went to wherever they took him. I don't remember dealing with them. I'm sure that they had their own medical facilities someplace that they were cared for. But if we captured them, whatever hospital was there treated them just like they treated our own. We didn't leave them to die like the Germans left our men to die.

You knew that the Germans were not treating the Americans well? You said earlier, one of the

things that you hoped, that if you treated them well that they'd treat the Americans as well.

Well, that's all we could hope for. I don't know. I haven't met anybody that was treated by the Germans. I would hope that they treated our people as well as we treated theirs. We were not unkind to them. We didn't fall all over them, either, but we gave them adequate care. And I think any American medical service personnel would do the same thing no matter what country you're fighting.

Did you see any instances of the black market? Lots of supplies and lots of things go through the hospitals that had a high value on the civilian black market.

I'm sure it went on but I didn't see it, or I wasn't aware of it, let's put it that way. I know they used cigarettes to buy a lot of stuff. But now, what they were buying, I don't know. I think that the guys used to buy socks and wines and stuff. Because you know GIs, they had to have their little booze. And the French liked cigarettes; the French *still* like the cigarettes. And the GIs still like the beer, and the wine, and the booze. They haven't changed. It's never going to change.

That's just a condition that comes with the uniform?

That's right.

You hand them that uniform and . . .

They got to have that booze. I think that's human nature. I mean, you take a GI stationed stateside. When he gets off duty—I'm talking about single men now—they're looking for the good time. They're looking [for] where the gals are, for where there's

good booze, and good food. And those three things go hand in hand. And that's the way they are. It will never change. It's been that way for a long, long time.

Before we turned the tape on, we were talking about a nurse that you had known who had been raped in Bataan. And the question occurs to me, why did the Americans, at that level—not always but generally—treat everyone better than the other side? And I'm sure there are stories of Japanese who helped on the Bataan Death March as well as ones who were cruel. And I'm sure there are stories of German nurses who helped American POWs. But the stories, consistently, are that we always tried to treat everybody as well as we could under the circumstances, and that they didn't have the same respect for our soldiers and our personnel.

I have no idea. Maybe it's the way they were brought up. Maybe it's their culture.

It was something you talked about during the time? You talked about being good to people and about caring?

We were brought up to care for others here in the U.S. and then when you go overseas you still treat people that way. You want people to treat you like you're going to treat them. Do unto others as others can do, you know. How does it go? Do unto others . . .

. . . as you'd have them do unto you.

. . . to you, yes. And I think, to me, that's the only way to live. I think most Americans think that way. If they don't, something's wrong with them.

Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the war that I didn't ask?

I can't think of a thing. It was a wonderful twenty-seven years of my life and I hope other nurses or medical service personnel feel the same way—that they contributed something to mankind in some way, some fashion. Whatever I did to whomever, maybe they'll say a nice prayer for me someday.

You said, after twenty-seven years, you retired as a lieutenant colonel.

Yes. I started out as a second lieutenant and ended as a lieutenant colonel. I was an administrator when I retired, chief nurse of the hospital.

RAYMOND M. HELLMANN

Ken Adams: If we could begin by you telling us who you are, where you were born, when you were born, and something about the background of your family?

Raymond M. Hellman: I was born in Flushing, New York—it's a lousy name, but it's something I've lived with for a long time—in 1923. My birthday is March 20. My dad was Richard Hellmann, founder of Hellmann's Mayonnaise. And my mother was Nina. She was a wonderful mother and a great lady.

How many kids?

I have one half brother and two sisters. That was our family. Dad came over from Germany. My mother was English. Where they met, I don't know.

Did he bring the mayonnaise concept with him?

When he came over here, he worked for a delicatessen in New York City. In those days, the delicatessens used to make their own

mayonnaise. People used to come from blocks around because they liked Dad's mayonnaise. Then he got the idea one day, "Why don't I try and bottle it?" which he did. That was the whole key to starting it out. It has eggs in it, but once it's sealed, it will stay fresh without refrigeration until it's opened. He used to peddle the stuff in New York City in a horse and carriage. [laughter]

Did it get larger distribution than New York? Or was it just in New York?

It became national. Out here it's called Best Foods. Back east it's Hellmann's. I don't know where the split is, but halfway across the United States somewhere. So it was very, very interesting.

Did your father do well during the Depression? Was that a good time for his business?

Everybody has to eat. As far as I know, everything went fine. He had his lumps just like anybody else, but it was a good business. He

sold out when I was ten or eleven, somewhere around in there, because he had a very bad case of bleeding ulcers. The doctor told him that he had about three or four years to live. Dad outlived all his doctors. [laughter] He died when he was ninety-four, so he did all right.

What kind of activities did you do when you were growing up? Did you play sports?

Yes. I started out in high school in Scarsdale, where our home was, and went to Hotchkiss, which is a prep school. Dad was always one who thought education was important. I went to Hotchkiss for three years. I wasn't doing too well, scholastically. I always thought I was dumb. The fourth year, [Dad] sent me to a school called Wassookeg, in Dexter, Maine, which had a student body of twelve and a faculty of twelve. No, wait a minute the faculty was twelve and the student body was about twenty. Every time you're in class, if you have another guy there, you get every other question. You can't help but learn. That straightened me out scholastically. They taught you how to study and all the rest of that.

I remember [that was] the first place that I ran across the [use of] incentive in education, which was interesting. If you had what they call an X average, which was an A, then you had one night out a week on the town where you could go to the movies. In Dexter, that's the only thing you could do. [laughter] The point was just to get out, with nobody watching you or anything. And boy, the guys used to study like hell just to go to the movies. We ought to put some of that to work today, I think.

What year did you graduate from prep school?

I was in the class of 1942. Then I went to Dartmouth, and that's when I got caught in

the war. I was a freshman at Dartmouth. I guess I had three quarters of a year and then got drafted. That's when I volunteered for the ski troops. I knew that I was going to get drafted anyway.

Where did you learn to ski?

We used to go up to Lake Placid, New York, every Christmas since I was ten years old, thereabouts. We spent Christmas vacation up there, and that's where I learned to ski.

Were you a good skier by the time you got out of prep school?

Yes, I was pretty good.

You were in your junior year of prep school when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

That's right.

Do you remember anything about the details? Where you were, how you felt, any of that?

Not really. That's a long time ago. I'm seventy-two. [laughter]

Sometimes people remember exactly where they were.

I was in Hotchkiss, and I remember thinking, "Oh shit! Here we go!" That was my reaction . . . I was just a kid. I didn't have any feelings one way or the other.

As soon as you got out of prep school, you started college the following . . . ?

Yes.

What did you plan on being?

At that time, I didn't have the slightest idea.

They drafted you in your first year?

That's right.

Did you have any ROTC experience?

No.

How did you end up . . . ?

I applied for the 10th Mountain Division. First of all, I entered the V-12 program at Dartmouth, which was a Navy program. That would have allowed me to finish my college education, then go ahead and become an ensign in the Navy, and then a leader. I did all the paperwork, they signed me up, and everything was fine. I had to go down to Boston for a physical, and they discovered that I have a cataract in my right eye, from an accident that I had had. That washed me out of the Navy. The Army didn't give a damn.

The Army didn't give a . . . ?

I was good enough. [laughter]

Did you volunteer?

Then I volunteered for the ski troops.

Before basic training or after basic training?

This was before. I got drafted before my volunteerism was accepted. I was sent to Camp Swift and that's where my basic training started. Then I got transferred to Camp Hale because I was accepted into the ski troops.

Did you finish the regular basic training at Camp Swift?

No, I finished at Camp Hale.

How long had you been at Camp Swift?

I don't remember. A couple of months.

During the regular individual basic training . . .

That was an interesting experience for a sheltered individual, because I was put in a company where about half of the guys couldn't read or write. That was a real eye opener for me. I spent my evenings writing letters for these guys. I think I got four of them married, writing love letters for them. [laughter] It was fun.

You were sheltered, is one way to put it. You had been to private schools, and on nice skiing vacations. How did you handle the physical part of basic training, with illiterate sergeants yelling at you and all that?

At Camp Hale, when the 86th Regiment, which is part of the 10th Mountain, was just being formed, we had a first sergeant named Chapin. He lined us all up. I think all of the guys there were college kids. He says, "All right, you college assholes! You're in the Army now, and by God, you're going to have to listen to me!" And we all chuckled and laughed at him. It was funny as hell. He never could get over that. But the guys were all college kids. They knew what was going on. And necessarily, basic training turned out to be pretty good, because we knew what was going on. Or we were smarter than the ordinary run of the mill soldier, I guess is what I'm trying to tell you.

Was there an awareness in the 10th Mountain that you were something special and you were training for something special? Did you have the feeling of being an elite?

Absolutely. When a bunch of the guys got together, it was always fascinating, because we always played games. We used to get second lieutenants that would come up from Fort Benning. We used to call them ninety day wonders. They'd get up to Camp Hale, which at 9,500 feet, is high. The air is thin. We had been there for a while. You'd get these new guys in and they'd say, "All right, guys, we're going to have a run." Well, the guys [coming there from] sea level could run at that altitude about a block, or half a block, and that was it. [laughter] We used to play around that way a lot.

What kind of training did you do?

Regular basic training. The only difference between that and regular would be that we had rock climbing and skiing. I was the ski instructor. I think we taught ten thousand guys how to ski, and we only had three breaks, which is really amazing when you come to think of it. But you're dealing with a bunch of kids that are all in good physical condition, and that's what it's all about.

The physical training portion of basic was vigorous?

Just like anybody else, we had twenty-five mile marches with ninety pound packs, and all that stuff. It was strenuous, sure, but that's what training is all about.

10th Mountain, though, added a little extra? They expected their people to be a little tougher and a little more fit?

I don't know. I can't really answer that. But I know that the morale was very high, in terms of we wanted to show everybody what we could do. We took everything as a challenge

and a big game. The ultimate game is war. That's what happened. Apparently, that's what happened to the whole division, because during the war we succeeded very well.

Your regiment was which regiment again?

Eighty-sixth.

How long were you in training in Camp Hale?

I was in training for two years. The last eight months was over in Italy. I was lucky that we kept training, and training, and training, and training. Everybody got a little pissed off—wondering when the hell we were going to go and fight. We finally got the chance and away we went.

You spent two years in camp? You went in in 1942?

I entered the service the 22nd of March in '43, and was separated the 29th of November, '45.

As a unit, everybody was eager to go?

To fight? Yes.

Why do you suppose they held them out so long?

Mainly because they didn't know how to use us. I think what happened was that there was a stalemate in Italy. Belvedere was a line of mountains. The front line troops weren't able to break through. So they put us to work and, "Boom!" off we went, which is what mountain training is all about. We spearheaded the drive across the Po Valley, which is as flat as the palm of your hand. We always felt exposed. We much preferred the mountains.

When you got your orders to finally go overseas, where were you? Did you get a leave or anything first?

No. We went to Austin, Texas, for flatland training. It was really funny. The guys had their first leave after going to Austin, and they checked into the local hotel. Because we had had mountain training, [the guys] brought climbing ropes with them. [They] rappelled out of the windows down the side of the hotel, which got everybody excited. [laughter] They have the biggest cockroaches there in the world, I think. Then from there we went overseas to Italy.

You went by ship from New York?

We had to take a train from Texas to Virginia. Hampton Roads is where we shipped off from. We were on the SS *Argentina*, which was a cruise ship converted to a troop ship, and which was not very good. We got over there all right and landed at Naples. From Naples we went up to Leghorn, and that's when we really started.

What was the trip like?

Crowded.

You were a tech sergeant by then?

Yes.

You went as a unit. Most people went over as individuals, but you went as a unit. You probably had a better time on the way over.

Well, I don't know who you talked to—they probably were replacements. We went over as a division, as a unit. We came back the same way. Going over we were on an Army

boat, which wasn't run very well. Coming back we were on a victory ship, which was run by the Navy. That was absolutely super, because those guys knew what the hell they were doing. We had a lot of fun.

I have to tell you a story. On the victory ships the head—what we call the head were toilets—were all lined up on the bow of the boat underneath the forecastle, which is an enclosed area. The sheer line of the boat slopes. There's nothing but a trough of water underneath all these seats that were lined up, thirty or forty on one side. The water was pumped from the sea, wetting it down and out. This one guy got the bright idea that everybody would go to the bathroom early in the morning. He took this blob of toilet paper, soaked it in lighter fluid, and sat up at the high end. While everybody was doing their duty, why, he lit this thing and let it flow down. You could see these guys periodically bob up and down as this went under them. [laughter] That was one of the funny things you remember.

That's probably indicative of the morale. Was the morale good in the division? Did everybody play crap games and that sort of thing?

No. We played a lot of bridge, which again is a little different, I guess, than the normal cruise. But I can remember playing hands of bridge in my sleep, for crying out loud. There was nothing else to do.

The trip takes a couple of weeks?

Yes.

Did you get escorted?

We went over in a convoy. We didn't run across anybody. Nobody shot at us or anything.

Those convoys could have a lot of ships in them. I would think that there would be an emotion attached to being [part of] something so large. It's not a common experience.

Never occurred to me.

Never occurred to you? Too busy playing bridge?

My whole war experience was in a platoon, and I never saw the big picture. We were told that we had to take that hill over there, and that became my life.

You were the platoon sergeant for?

Mortars.

A mortar platoon?

Yes. They had six 81 mm mortars. That's a fairly good size mortar. It's not an attack weapon, [it's used] in a support role. We had smoke shells, which is white phosphorus; high explosive, HE light, which was an anti-personnel device that exploded on contact and spread shrapnel all over; and HE heavy, is what they used to call it, which was a demolition round used on trucks and stuff. It had a little delayed action before it exploded.

And you said that you used reserve mules as transport?

Yes. I'll never forget that during training you had to clean their feet; they'd make us do this. The mules got tired of having their feet cleaned—they probably used the same mules all the time. Anyway, this one that I had, I picked up his rear leg and he sort of leaned on me a little bit. They're big animals. Jesus, they're tremendous if you've ever seen one.

This mule wiggles his leg, and I'm going back and forth, and oh boy, I don't see how anybody can get near those damn animals, I'll tell you.

You said you had mule guys, people that were specifically assigned to take care of them?

Yes, like a bunch of cowboys, really. Otherwise, unless you're trained, you don't know how to do it. The only trouble was that sometimes they'd get spooked, particularly during an attack. You could have your mortars tied on to the back of a mule, and if they got spooked they'd take off, and you'd have to go chase them. Sometimes they'd take off through mine fields. That wasn't too red hot because you don't want to chase one through a mine field. I've seen mules step on mines and go up in smoke. The only thing that you see is the tail coming down.

If the mule's carrying ammunition, I suppose that adds to the explosion?

Most of the ammunition was fail safe. It has safety pins and this kind of stuff, so it doesn't burn unless you have a direct explosion. I guess it could go off. I never saw that happen.

When you landed in Italy, you landed at Naples? How long were you there?

We were there for a couple of days. Then they put us on some other boats and shipped us up to Leghorn. That's where we got our team together. We relieved some troops up on the Belvedere Line.

We got our first taste of what the war was all about up there. We were parked next to a railroad in bivouac. Somebody, I don't know why, went down to the railroad tracks and set off a bouncing Betty, which is a mine the

size of a hand grenade that pops up about three feet high and explodes. Well, it kills you. The medics said, "Well, gee, this is our chance to go ahead and help somebody." They went down there, which you never should do. They told us in training [that] if you set one of those off, that means there are mines around. For Christ's sake, don't go down there and set off a bunch more. These guys forgot. Down they went, and they set off three more. That's how we lost a lot of our medics. But it was impersonal. I never knew any of the guys that got killed. It was just one of those things that happened.

Is a mortar platoon far enough back from the others that you were in a different area of combat? You're not exposed in the same way that . . .

We're support troops. The assault troops are probably five hundred yards ahead. Company M, which is the one that I was in, was a heavy weapons platoon. We had the mortars. And we had the .50 caliber light machine guns, which is kind of unusual. That's not a stock item for infantry. We were all support. The rifle companies were the ones that did the initial assaults. We would come in behind them. They would take out positions at night, or something or the other. We would target in attack routes that the enemy might use.

If you're going to make an attack, then you would have sort of a softening up process, where the mortars would go ahead and put a barrage through prior to the riflemen going in and making an attack. And of course, in order to set the mortars up, you had to have visual observation. So we had observers up front who were directing fire. He'd look through his binoculars and give you instructions in terms of increasing the yardage or changing

the direction of the gun. And we had sound-power telephones we had to lay wire [for], and we had to follow them one way, and do a direct fire.

Was the forward observer somebody from your platoon?

Yes. We had three second lieutenants, who were supposedly the forward observers, one first lieutenant, the platoon sergeant—that was me—and three section sergeants. A section consisted of two 81 mm mortars. We had three sections, so we had six mortars.

Each mortar had four men?

No. We had more than that. You had the gunners and you had the observers. Well, you're asking me about a table of organization that I've forgotten. [laughter]

You were fighting against Germans, but was there still Italian units in that line or not?

The Italians were fighting with us. The Alpini were mountain troops that were on our side. I don't understand the political ramifications of that, except I know that these guys helped us.

Directly? Did you [have] direct communication with them?

They were under their own command. They'd carry ammunition. That's about all they did in certain situations when we were being attacked. Anyway, we were short of ammunition in Italy, because most of it was going over into the European theater.

The Italian campaign has been called "The Forgotten War." Everything else had shifted

the emphasis; D-Day, the Battle of the Bulge, everything's happening some place else. You guys are left trying to climb one hill after another, with the Germans occupying the high ground and shooting down at you.

Yes. We had a night attack, by the 87th, I believe, which actually broke the Belvedere Line. They climbed this cliff at night and attacked the Germans from the rear. They were facing the other way. They thought nobody [would be] crazy enough to climb this damn thing in the middle of the night. We did it.

Do you remember the names of some of the battles?

No. I had my own little isolated world, and it consisted of about five hundred yards around me. That's what I was concerned with. I tried to stay alive and keep my platoon alive. That was it. I had no idea of the big picture.

You got your orders directly from the first lieutenant in charge of your platoon?

And he got his from the company commander, the company commander got his from the battalion commander, and it just went up the line to the general. It all filtered down, and they told you what you were going to do.

Somewhere up the line, like the first lieutenant when he went to the company commander, [or] the captain commander when he went to the battalion, someone got to see a map and have some sort of say. He got to see . . .

. . . yes, the big picture. But I never saw any of that stuff.

Did that frustrate you? Did it frustrate the guys?

No.

You didn't know where you were going next. You just kind of sat around and waited for somebody to tell you what to do?

In the Army, that's the whole game. You hurry up and wait. You never know what the hell you're going to do. That was what the training was all about. It got to be very personal when you saw your objective. You decide that's where your guys are going. Boy, that was all she needed. And so that's the way you went.

You have your St. Christopher's medal that was hit with a piece of shrapnel. Where did that happen?

That was at the end of the war.

You were [there] eight months, so you must have arrived in Italy in November, or so, of '44?

I guess, yes.

And you were pretty much in combat from then on?

Yes. Until the end of the war.

Until the end of the war? It was every day for the rest of the war? Did you get to come off the line during that period of time? Did you get replaced by somebody and get to go on R & R some place for a couple days?

Oh, yes, that's all hazy to me. But it wasn't all combat per se. You got pulled back and another unit would go in. What they usually

did was they'd have—again, I'm not sure of the overall picture because I wasn't involved in it—a couple of companies or battalions who would go ahead and make the push. Then they had one in reserve. They varied those so that you took turns at the tough action.

Did you get to go over to Capri, or to Rome, or to any of the places where they had the Red Cross R & R camps?

We went to Florence.

What was the daily life like . . . getting food, and finding a place to sleep? You had the best cold weather gear of anybody in Europe. You had been testing stuff in Colorado that nobody else got to see during the war. You had good sleeping bags. You had good gear.

Well, a lot of the people didn't use the sleeping bags. They used blankets instead. You get into a sleeping bag, and it's too hard to get out of if a patrol comes in at night. It's pretty easy to bayonet a guy in a bag.

Did you have patrols that got through the lines?

Oh, yes, absolutely, they sent patrols out. You'd take up night time positions. You'd have guards and passwords and all the rest of that. When your guys were out of action, at night particularly, why, you're on guard all the time because you don't want to get surprised. And you have to sleep.

As the platoon sergeant, would one of your responsibilities be to set out the guards and check them periodically during the night?

Right. I used to get up three or four times and make sure everybody was awake—well, the guys that are supposed to be awake.

One of the things that I've heard is that you didn't get enough sleep. That you were kind of in a state of chronic tiredness all the time.

Yes, we were pooped. You had to carry all that stuff, and it got to be a real drag. But we were young, you know. Your recuperative powers are very good.

At the end of every day, did you get hot food?

No, we'd get K-rations most of the time. But we also had mountain stoves so we could heat a lot of the stuff up. We had mess kitchens that used to follow us around, and give us hot food whenever they could. The only thing that bothered us a lot, was, whenever we were in a town and we would get fed, all the kids would come around and watch you eat. They would want food if you could give it to them.

There's a classic Bill Mauldin cartoon about the Prince and the Pauper, [with] the G.I. standing there, and he looks as poor as the kid, and the kid's standing there, and they're both hungry waiting for somebody to . . .

Our guys used to go ahead and feed the kids. But we'd make them eat it. Otherwise, they'd take it home to their families. We felt that the food was more important to them than anybody else.

Did you have much contact with the Italian civilians?

Oh, sure. I couldn't speak Italian, so the contact was "buon giorno," this kind of stuff.

This was really funny. We got into one town in the mountains. We used to dig slit trenches, which is where you go to the bathroom. You'd squat over a trench. When it got full or you're moving out, you'd cover

it up. The Italian families, in order to keep their valuables from the Germans, would dig underground areas where they put their valuables. Often times when we were digging these slit trenches, why, we'd run into their valuables. You'd be squatting in the morning, and some gal would be walking down the street, and she'd look at you and say, "Buon giorno." [laughter] They didn't think anything about it at all. It was a whole different set of values, I guess you would say, as far as bodily functions go. It took some getting used to. It was embarrassing to get caught with your bare ass hanging out, and some gal walking by and saying, "Buon giorno." [laughter]

I would think that would have been one of the first things that would have been difficult for you when you got into basic training. Instead of having private bathrooms with doors, you've got long rows of open . . .

. . . toilets. You're sitting next to somebody, doing your duty in the morning, reading the paper or whatever. It was just amazing. But you get used to it. It's just like anything else, a matter of training.

Were the Italians glad to have you there? Would they smile, and were they nice to you?

They were glad. This was towards the end of the war when we spearheaded the drive across the Po Valley, and the Germans were in retreat. Every time we liberated a town, the church bells would ring. We were all in jeeps and trucks, rolling through until we hit resistance. The town folk would come out with bread—big Italian loaves about two feet long and hard as rocks, and they'd toss them at you. They were throwing wine bottles, and everything, at you. You'd be dodging all these

damn things. They were tickled to death that we . . .

Could you see signs of the German occupation? Did you have a sense of what occupation had been like for them?

No, I didn't, because we didn't stay that long. We just ran through, and when we stopped at night, we usually did not stop in a town. We were in a field some place, in a defensive position.

Your first campaign was to assault the mountains and break through?

. . . get through and then spearhead the drive across the Po Valley.

You went from the mountains to the absolute flat plains?

And miles, and miles, and miles of wrecked German equipment alongside the road where our airplanes had strafed the hell out of them. The Germans used horses, and of course some got killed, too. I didn't mind seeing the Germans dead, but a dead horse bothered me.

Did you have any feelings about Germans as individuals? Who were you fighting? Did you fight Hitler; did you fight Germans; did you fight an army?

We were fighting the guys that were shooting at us. That's all it takes. I don't care what color they were. That's the enemy and, son of a bitch, it's kill or be killed.

There was no sense of divided loyalty in you, since your father was from Germany?

No. No. No.

How did your father feel when you went in?

He was an American. He had strong family ties in Germany, but he made this his home. "That's your duty son, go." He was behind us a hundred percent, I imagine. I'm just telling you what my feeling is. I don't know what he felt.

Did you have a sense of anger during the war?

Oh, yes. You had a friend killed, or something like that, and the son of a bitch with the crowned helmet did it. It upsets you and you get angry. I've seen situations where prisoners came in, and they'd get shot before they got to the line. Not by me, but by people that had a buddy shot, or something. It was just a matter of revenge. Not very pretty.

Do any of the symbols still make you angry? If you see the iron cross, or if you see one of those helmets, or any of that?

No.

Do they invoke anything in you at all anymore?

No. The SS troops were the ones that used to get us a little upset. They'd get kids that maybe were fifteen to seventeen, somewhere around in there, and they'd [place them as snipers]. You'd be in position. They'd be hidden up in the hills someplace taking pot shots at you. You'd have to send out a patrol. We had to wipe them out. What would usually happen would be that the patrol would get to them, and the sniper would figure, "Well, hell. That's all she wrote." He'd wave a white flag, put his hands up, and come on out. He may

have killed three or four guys. We didn't take that too kindly. Normally he got executed. That's the name of the game. But these were just kids. That's the way they were brought up. They were good soldiers, the Germans were.

Did you respect their ability to fight?

Oh, absolutely. If they'd had better supply lines and more ammunition, they would have done more damage. Fortunately, we had the air cover by then. So it was a lot easier than it could have been.

Did you use the air cover a lot? Was it an important part of your support?

Yes. We had the Thunderbolts, I guess they call them. Those guys were in full support. Whenever we would make a push, the artillery would go in and lay down a barrage. We'd do our bit. The airplanes would do their bit. Then the rifle companies would take off. That's the way it went.

And then once the rifle company had secured position, then you would move up?

We'd move up right behind them, yes. I can remember one time while we were doing this, we had to . . . you're always aware of cover. You always want to take advantage of whatever cover is around so that you don't make a target. I remember running across a field one day with a pack on. We were separated. You always keep your guys twenty or thirty yards apart, so that if a shell comes in, you only kill one guy. But here I am running across this field and really dragging ass. I was tired. I heard these [sounds] going pop in my ear. I'd wipe my hand off, "What the hell is this?" Suddenly, it occurred to me, "Some

son of a bitch is shooting at me!” And boy, did I take off! There was a ditch and boom, into it. It was amazing because you don’t think of those things. Here you are trying to wave bullets away—crazy.

Just like flies?

Yes.

Did you discover where the shots were coming from?

No, I just kept going. Once I got across the field, I stopped. I wasn’t worried about it.

Where were you when the war ended?

In Lake Garda, in a town up there. I’ve forgotten the name of the place. When I got hit in the tunnel, that was about the end of the war. We’d moved into this one town. That tunnel shot knocked out a lot of our company. I wound up being the first sergeant, that was the ranking noncom, until they had another replacement come in. Here I was, a kid twenty-two years old. One of the duties of the first sergeant was to go ahead and write KIA (killed in action) reports to families. “Joe Jones out on attack was killed by enemy fire on such and such a hill. And in the best tradition of the U.S. Army, he did all these nice things.” That bothered the hell out of me. I never had the details of what these guys really did. Nobody would, or nobody could, tell you. All you had to do was write letters of apology, really. “Gee, your son got killed.” You’d try and do it in such a way that it sounds reasonable and makes sense, because I could just visualize what a mother would be reading. That bothered the hell out of me. I didn’t like that. Fortunately, that only lasted a week.

Your whole company was moving through a tunnel, and the Germans were on the other side shooting into the tunnel?

We were attacking up the east side of Lake Garda. It’s a mountain road. If you could imagine five hundred yards of open space in a mountain, a tunnel, and then open space in the tunnel. There was a whole series of tunnels. We were attacking and the Germans set off a couple of air bursts, which are artillery shells that burst in the air. The first thing to do is try and find something over your head. Well, the tunnel was there. So in you go. The whole damn company damn near got in this big tunnel. Then they put one inside. So they chased us in and boom! Did a good job. I lost three quarters of my platoon. Not all killed, a lot of them wounded. When you’re wounded, you get sent back. Then you get a bunch of replacements. Then you got to start all over, training those guys on what they’re suppose to do.

That was at the end. You only had about a week to go and the war ended.

Yes.

What did you do when you heard the war was over?

They moved us up to the border. The Italian-Austrian- Swiss border, I think. We stayed with Italian families. First time I ever slept in a feather bed. It was marvelous.

We got a bunch of guys together and we decided we’d go skiing. We climbed the mountain. We got up to the top of this mountain, and we were giving serious thought to skiing into Switzerland, in which case we would have been impounded for the rest of the war. We thought maybe we’d have to go

over to Japan. We thought maybe that [skiing to Switzerland] would be a good idea. But we didn't. [laughter]

You expected to be pulled off, brought to the United States for some additional training, and then sent to the invasion of Japan?

Yes.

You didn't have a sense of real release: "It's all over for us."

No, not at all. I think that it was the 34th Division that was scheduled to go back to the States. Our general said, "Well, come on, guys, we're better than they are. Why don't you send us?" We got their boats, and we were on our way back when they dropped the bomb. We were in the middle of the ocean on our way over there.

Were you pretty pleased to hear that the war was over?

Oh, absolutely. Of course, we had no idea a bomb hit. Well, we had seen a lot of bombs. We had no idea what it was.

At that point it was just another big bomb?

Yes.

You came back on the victory ship. You said that it was better organized . . . better food . . . cleaner?

Yes. The Navy ship. Well, it's their business, they run ships. It's different than the way the Army does. I remember our colonel used to go down into the enlisted men's mess and try to steal some food. We knew this because we had KP duty. We had to clean up

and stuff. I'll never forget this old Navy chief. The colonel comes in, and he wanted to get some food or something. The chief told him to get his fat ass out of the enlisted men's mess! We all thought that was great.

What were some of the other differences between the way the Navy ran a ship and the way that the Army ran a ship?

Basically, the Navy chiefs took good care of the enlisted men. On the ships, the officers always thought their shit didn't stink . . . excuse me . . . they used to pull rank a lot. In the Navy there was no rank pulled at all. They ran the ship. They didn't give a damn who you were. You have your mess, our guys have this one. They took care of us. And the quarters were much better. On that cruise ship going over, you'd get a cabin with six or seven guys in it, with makeshift bunks. On the victory ship, they had large areas where you had bunks stacked up six high, one on top of the other, but at least you had passageways through. Your toilet facilities, as I explained to you before, were very functional . . . worked very well.

When you got back to the United States, what did they do with you next?

I don't remember.

Where did you get discharged?

Fort Francis E. Warren, in Wyoming. We stayed there for about a month, getting the paperwork done, and getting our discharges, and all that kind of stuff. And of course, we had the point system. Whether you got out of the Army, or not, depended upon how many points you had. You got five points for medals. That's why everybody wanted to get a medal.

[laughter] That's what I keep accusing Jack Streeter of; the only reason he got those five Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, and Purple Hearts was because he wanted to get out. [laughter]

Did he disagree with you?

Hell, no. He agreed with me. He lives right down the street. We commiserate.

When you were discharged in Wyoming, which is a long ways from Dartmouth College, and a long ways from where you started, what did you do?

I went back east and went back to school. I married my girlfriend, went back to Dartmouth as a married student, and finished up.

Were you a better student when you went back?

Yes. The only thing I sort of regret, is I didn't join a fraternity. I wasn't going to put up with all that hazing crap.

I remember one funny experience. I took a physics course. This physics teacher had a policy of locking the doors to his class if you were late. One day it was icy on the road, I was walking along, I slipped and fell, and my books went all over the place. I finally got everything back together and went in. Just as I got there, he slammed the door in my face. I got pissed. [laughter] I went over to the administrative office and I said, "Whoever that guy is, for Christ's sake, tell him not to lock the goddamn door. I'm paying for this and I expect some . . . " "You're not a student anymore, you're a guy that's been shot at through the war, and you have a different attitude.

Were you a little angry? Did you come back with a little of the anger that you . . . ?

Yes. To carry on with that, Hubert Dinter was a German Luftwaffe pilot who opened an engineering firm in Reno. He and I eventually became friends, but it took me about two years before I could accept him . . . having been shot at, you know. If you can once put that aside, well . . . [then] it's OK.

You said you just didn't think about the war anymore. How long did it take you before you had settled in? Until you didn't think about the war, you didn't react to sounds, and you didn't have any more dreams about it? Until you were just a regular guy?

The only thing that I can remember that used to bother me, was going to the movies and seeing a war film. When the artillery came over, I'd duck every time. I still do. If I'm watching a film now, I even go down when the incoming comes, because it's a distinctive sound. But I never had any nightmares, and that kind of stuff. None of that.

Why did you decide to become an architect?

I read *The Fountainhead*.

That's a good enough reason.

Here's a guy with principles, and he's the same kind of guy I am. I said, "Well, hell." I always had a little artistic talent, and I figured that would be a good deal. I had some good art professors at Dartmouth. So that's why I became an architect.

How did you get to Reno?

I came to Reno to get a divorce. I got here and went to work for Ferris & Erskine, which was a local architectural firm. My first impression was, "Gee, if anybody can make

it anywhere as an architect, it ought to be in Reno because the architecture's so bad." At least, I thought it was bad. That was in the old days. And so I went to work for this firm.

Graham Erskine was a New Yorker, one of those high stressed, "go get 'em" guys. He tried to get ahold of a plumber. The plumber wouldn't answer his telephone. He says, "Hellmann, I want you to go down there and find out where that guy is, and why he isn't answering his phone. I want to talk to him. We've got this problem on this job, and I want to solve it."

"Yes, sir," says me.

Off I go . . . I think it was Murphy Plumbing, somebody like that. I go down to his office, finally find it, and there's a note on the door. This was a Wednesday. The note said, "Gone fishing. Be back Monday."

I just laughed. I said, "This is the town for me."

Compared to the east coast, this is kind of a laid back atmosphere?

Oh Christ, on the east coast, nobody ever does that. In the old days, you used to get your kids up and go hunting and that kind of stuff. It just is a laid back life, really. So that's why I stayed.

Reno didn't have the nicest buildings in the world, but it had the nicer lifestyle?

Yes, right.

What year did you come to Reno?

1952.

What year did you graduate?

'48. I stayed in Connecticut and went to Yale for my architectural training after

Dartmouth. Graduated with the class of '51. Then I got divorced. I got here and I said, "Well, hell, I'm going to stay." It was a good choice. It's the best damn place in the world—Lake Tahoe, and all that . . . wonderful.

Did you continue to ski?

I gave it up. When I taught skiing in the Army, I got my fill of it, really. We had to camp out from Christmas to Easter in the mountains. It got down to twenty and thirty below zero and you're in a damn tent. That's not the most comfortable thing in the world to do. I don't camp out any more either. [laughter]

The Association of the 10th Mountain Division?

I just joined it. I didn't know about it, and then I just ran across some guys. We had one meeting. I have sort of a mixed opinion. When I got through with the war, I wanted to get out of the Army—fast. After meeting these guys, now I know why. They're nice guys, but there's not a hell of a lot that we have in common other than the experiences in the war. A lot of the fellows that I met weren't in the active . . . they weren't in the 86th, or the 85th, or the 87th Regiments. They were in auxiliary groups. So they weren't really front line guys.

How does the war fit, in the total picture of your life? Was it important?

It was a wonderful experience that I wouldn't trade, but I sure as hell don't want to do it again. I think that military experience is something that everybody ought to have. I think it teaches you teamwork; it teaches you self reliance; it teaches you a sense of values; and is very important. In our kids today, I don't see that.

Was the war something you were proud of? Your tie with the 10th Mountain and your contribution?

Yes, it was. I have funny, mixed feeling about that. Bob Dole wears a Purple Heart, because he got his arm shot off or something, over in Italy. I was always a little embarrassed to wear any medals or that kind of stuff. But the older you get, as you look back on this as a survivor, these things become more important to you for some reason. I don't know why.

It seems to me that the generation of people who fought in the Second World War have made the largest contribution of any generation in the history of the country. The whole world certainly was different after the Second World War. Men came out and went back to college. They came back with a seriousness, a commitment to life, and did a lot of important things. I sense a pride in the generation, not only for the contribution to the war, but for the generation and the feeling that you accomplished something bigger than . . .

I think that can be solved or summed up in a couple of words: you're still alive. You survived under very stressful conditions. I think it's a learning experience and a maturing experience that you can't get any other way. You got to be shot at to understand what that's all about. [laughter] At least that's my feeling. I don't know what anybody else has told you.

Well, everybody pretty much thinks that your generation did some special things. And when they reflect on what they see now . . .

I don't think that's necessarily true. I think you take your best shot at life. It was

just a maturing experience, that's all. No big deal. I don't think we're any better than anybody today. I guess what you could say is that we proved that we could do something. The people today do the same damn thing in business, you know. I'm sure that they would be just as good in the Army as we were. All it takes is training. The training is important. That's why I said that everybody ought to have a couple of years of military experience. I think it makes a difference.

Would you give them all a pair of skis and send them up to eleven thousand feet?

You bet.

Keep them there for a couple years and let them sleep in the snow? [laughter]

This is the Bronze Star. Streeter's got this, and five Silver Stars, for Christ's sake. My ex-wife threw away the citations, but here was the article that was in the newspaper.

This you got from military service for combat from March 5 to May 2, 1945?

Yes.

It says you did a good job at getting the fire where it needed to be . . .

Well, I did.

. . . and courageously held fast the positions, delivering constant demoralizing fire.

Some lieutenant that wrote that thing had a gift of words. I think they have a book that teaches them how to write citations.

All you know is you didn't have one when you were writing for those poor kids?

That's right. And it bugs the hell out of me. I would have loved to have said all those good things. [laughter]

Do you have any experiences about the war that you didn't talk about?

Other than the Bronze Star? Probably. There's nothing that I can think of off hand.

I looked through Bill Mauldin's book. I keep showing that to people and I, myself, laugh like hell. The thing that bothers me most of all today, is a lot of people don't understand those cartoons. If you haven't been in a combat situation, I guess, maybe you can't.

In World War II, nobody had to tell us to escape if we were captured. You were told that this was your duty. So, that's what you did. If you could make it, why fine. That's why in all these prison camps and stuff, everybody tried to escape. In the Korean War, that urge wasn't there anymore. They had to actually tell people, that if you get captured, you're supposed to try and escape. And in Vietnam, I don't know . . . that's too close . . . I don't know what that was. But it just seems that the rules change somehow or another. That's just a silly observation.

From the time you're in, they taught people what to do?

Yes.

Kind of told them that the first twenty-four hours was the best time to escape. That the longer you were held captive, the farther back you would get, and the more difficult it would be, the better the control would be over you. The sooner you could try to escape, the better you'd be.

They didn't give us any specific training at all. I think it was youth. It was war as a game.

By God, that's what you're supposed to do, and that's what we did.

Did you still have that sense in 1948, after you graduated from Dartmouth (for sure you did when you were training in the mountains of Colorado and getting ready to go and everything) that you were training for the big football game, "Put me in! You know I want to go in. Put me in, coach, put me in!"

Yes.

After you had been to the big game, did you still feel that was the ultimate game?

Oh, I think so. Even though it was the ultimate game, I had trouble understanding why human beings would ever go to war to begin with. And to do the things that they do today, even. This Bosnia business is absolutely unbelievable.

That letter that you're holding was not just simply that you got your Saint Christopher medal hit by a piece of shrapnel.

No, this was for being in the war.

You had lost most of your platoon there. You got trapped inside of a tunnel, and one of those artillery rounds went off in there with you.

Yes. But it was my feeling in the war at that time, that's all.

PAUL B. KINCADE

Ken Adams: Where you were born and when? Give us a little background about yourself.

Paul B. Kincade: I'm Paul Bernard Kincade, Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy, retired. I was born in 1924 at White Memorial Hospital, in the Boyle Heights District of Los Angeles, California. When I was about two, my family, which was my parents and my brother, who is twenty-two months older than I, moved to San Diego. When I was about five my father left. My mother had to raise two boys, so she was out working six days a week, for about a dollar a day. We lived in what would be considered poverty today, but we didn't know we were poor. We just knew that we didn't have everything everybody else did.

What did she do?

She went to work first as a gift wrapper at a department store. Then she became a sales lady. Ultimately she worked into the credit department and became a credit clerk. That became her specialty over the years. She spent

quite a few years with the merchants' credit clearing house in San Diego. In 1943 she came back to Connecticut to visit me while I was in college there. She stayed on and went to work for Hartford Gas and Electric Company; and retired from there. She's now living in Chula Vista, California, in a retirement home, at the ripe old age of ninety-two.

As a child, did you recognize it was the Depression?

No. I sold magazines door to door when I was about nine, I guess. I was selling *Colliers*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Literary Digest*, of which I sold two. Those cost twenty-five cents apiece. One of them I sold only because the guy told me that if I could explain what the magazine was about he'd buy it—figuring I didn't know what it was—so I explained it to him.

At the clothing store my mother worked at, if a woman bought a dress they gave her a string of beads. Of course, some think we had plastic in those days, but they were artificial



PAUL B. KINCAIDE, U. S. NAVY, 1942

stones. My mother used to bring boxes full of those beads home for us kids to play with. Well, being enterprising, my brother and I went door to door selling the beads. My mother was very embarrassed when she came home and we gave her money and she found out we sold those beads. She didn't know whether to cry or to beat us. She was embarrassed that we were out selling these things, and yet here we brought in probably as much money in one day as she made in a week. [laughter]

So, I guess we knew times were tough. I don't think, as children, we knew what a depression was. I know that we lived right downtown in a very, very small one room apartment, right on the edge of the industrial district. We went to a school right around

the block that was all blacks and Hispanics. We were probably the only white kids in the class, and they used to take turns beating us up. We would hide between buildings until we heard the first bell and then we'd run like hell to get in the class before the second bell.

Mother would stop at the produce market at Twelfth and Broadway in San Diego every Saturday night and do her shopping. She would buy all the cheap but nutritious things. She'd put cauliflower on our plate and I'd tell her that I can't eat that, it stinks. She'd give me a very sincere look and point a finger at me and say, "You'd better eat everything on your dish. I can't guarantee that there will be anything on it tomorrow."

She created some very strong psychological anchors that stayed with me all these years. I could not push a dish away if it still had food on it, whether I wanted it or needed it. Then of course the Navy reenforced those anchors by having signs in the mess hall that said, "Take all you want, but eat all you take." They would have a big master at arms standing by the GI can to make sure you're not throwing food away. Those are very strong anchors that have stayed with me all my life. Until I got into my hypnosis business, I wasn't aware of this anchoring process. Now I can leave food on my dish or throw food away. It's kind of easy.

I went to several elementary schools because we were constantly moving. I guess in those days it was cheaper to move than to pay rent. We moved quite frequently. My mother remarried in 1932, when I was eight. We had a great step-father. He was a tailor, a real good tailor. He could look at you, and without measuring you, make a suit for you from top to bottom that would fit like a glove. He was a great guy. Unfortunately, he was an alcoholic. Their marriage broke up ten years later, in '42.

I went all through the school system in Los Angeles. I was an art major; it was my goal to be a commercial artist or a professional cartoonist. I'd won a couple of awards at a state fair in California, where my art teacher had sent my work up to be displayed.

When the war broke out, moving on to Pearl Harbor, that Sunday I was on my hands and knees in the front room reading the funny papers, and we had the radio on. They broke in with a news flash that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. I had just turned seventeen in August of '41. The year earlier, in 1940, my very best friend in school (he was a year older than me) who was like a brother (we used to sleep over at each others' houses) went into the Navy in February of '41. I tried to get my mother to let me quit school and join, because Bob quit in his senior year. He came from an unhappy family. His parents were just waiting for him to be old enough to go into the Navy, so that they could divorce. I tried to quit school with him, but Mother wouldn't hear it. She said, "You graduate from school and then you can do anything you want."

Meanwhile, my friend had gone to sea and he struck for the signalman rating aboard a cruiser. Then they sent him back to San Diego to fleet signal school. My brother and I'd go down to pick him up every night to bring him home when he got off for liberty. He would teach me everything that he learned in school that day. I dearly wanted to be a signalman in the Navy.

I had always wanted to be in the Navy for some reason. The uniforms just really attracted me. San Diego is a big Navy town. In fact, that's what it was for many years, a Navy town. When I'd take the street car downtown, we'd pass the Naval hospital. The sailors would all get on the street car and I'd just drool. I'd see those guys and I'd think

to myself, "You lucky guy, I wish I had that uniform. It just looks so sharp."

So, when Pearl Harbor day came along I went down the next morning, Monday morning, and stood in line for about two and a half hours to enlist. When I got up to the recruiter and gave him my papers, he looked them over and started laughing, "I've seen several hundred guys this morning, and you're the first one who has put as the reason for enlistment, career. Everybody before you has put patriotic duty or duration of the war. I see you're going to graduate from high school in February. Why don't you go back and go through your prom and your graduation ceremonies and all that, because you can never do it again. I promise you that we'll keep the war going for you." And twenty-seven years later, it's the only promise the Navy ever kept. [laughter]

I went back to school and went through the graduation and everything. I was quite active in high school. I think I was trying to compete with my brother. Not compete with him, but at least get some recognition. He didn't participate in anything at school. But, gee, I was a captain in the Army ROTC, I was on the rifle team, I was on the tennis team, I was a commissioner of boys activities and just, you know, did everything to be wanted. I was the head cheerleader. I spent all three years in high school as a cheerleader. I had a lot of fun in high school. I kind of hated to leave it.

After I enlisted in the Navy, I got the word I had been selected for an art scholarship at the Art Institute of Los Angeles, a very prestigious art school. But, I had already signed up for a four year scholarship with Uncle Sam (actually a three and a half year scholarship). I went in on what they called a "minority" or a "kiddie cruise," where, if you're under eighteen, you sign up until your twenty-first birthday. You get credit for a

full four years service, but you only do three years plus [the months before your eighteenth birthday]. So, I went to boot camp.

My brother was very angry I had volunteered for the Navy. He thought I was stupid. Earlier that year, in '41, my friend had got a tattoo when he went in the Navy. He got an anchor with an eagle on it, with his name on the anchor, on his shoulder. I wanted one just like it. But, I had to have my mother's signature to get a tattoo and she absolutely, positively refused. We had a woman living with us at the time, a friend who was going through a divorce. We had a spare bedroom so she was staying there. One day I was doing some drawing and I sat down, took colored pencils and drew the tattoo, the anchor, on my arm. Then I rolled my sleeves down. I went in the kitchen, I was standing around talking to my mother and this lady, and I casually rolled my sleeves up, you know, so they'd see the tattoo. This woman, Dorie, saw the tattoo and she's signalling to me to roll my sleeves down. She was very protective. I kept saying, "What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you?"

My mother turned around and said, "What's going on here?" She sees the tattoo on my arm and she goes, "Oh, you didn't! You went and got a tattoo."

I said, "What are you talking about?"

She said, "That tattoo on your arm."

I said, "You mean this?" I took and smudged it off.

She got a little upset because we were playing games with her. Her friend took her into the bedroom and talked to her. "You know, he's going to go into the Navy, and we might be going into a war. You're going to feel bad if you don't let him get the tattoo, and something happens to him."

Mom came out in tears and said, "All right, you can have a tattoo, but just a little one."

I went down and got the same tattoo my friend did, only without the eagle. I thought the eagle looked like the bird on the Mexican flag and I didn't like it. I had the tattoo put up on my deltoid, instead of my biceps. The tattoo artist got very upset, "If you put it up there, you won't be able to put the eagle on later."

I said, "That's why I want it up there. I don't want to go out some time, maybe get drunk, and go get the eagle put on." I have that tattoo today; it doesn't have an eagle on it.

You said your brother was upset about you joining the Navy?

Yes.

What did your brother do?

He was an aviation machinists' mate for Ryan Aircraft Company. He was quite a machinist. He had his own car that he was always tearing apart all the time, doing body work on it and everything. He got a job at Ryan Aircraft working on planes doing something on the trainers they were building.

He first told me that I was stupid to get a tattoo. He was very adamant that I should not get a tattoo. He was a surrogate father to me—always telling me what to do and what not to do. I went and got a tattoo just to spite him, and he was very upset about that. About a week later I came home from a late date and went in to go to bed. There was a note on my pillow from Mother. "Before you go to bed, go look at your brother's arm." I go in his bedroom and he's sleeping there, his arm is outside the covers with a bandage on it. He got the same tattoo I got, only with his name on it. He had his on his biceps, but he didn't have the eagle; to this day he still doesn't.

What's your brother's first name?

Ray. Actually, his name is Clarence Raymond, Jr. He hates the name Clarence so he goes by his middle name. Whenever we would have a fight I'd always have the last word. I'd say, "Well, at least my name ain't Clarence!" [laughter] He's retired, living down in San Diego.

Did he go through the whole war as a machinist?

Yes. When I went in the Navy he told me I was stupid for going in the Navy. Well, when I finished boot camp and was in signal school, then darned if he didn't enlist. He went through boot camp, and then, because of his aviation air craft training, they sent him to aviation machinists' mate school right in San Diego.

When I finished boot camp, I took all these general education exams, the GCT test or something like that; basically a battery of IQ tests, to see what my different talents were. I guess about the next to last week from graduation from boot camp, I got a call to go over to the education office. There was a lieutenant and a chief from Lakehurst, New Jersey, Aerographers' Mate School. All my marks were high except mechanical, which was about midway. They said, "Because of your high marks, you've been selected to go to Aerographers' Mate School." An aerographers' mate is a meteorologist, a weather guesser.

I said, "Where is the school?"

They said, "Lakehurst, New Jersey."

Well, I'd never been out of California except to go to Tijuana; and we went up to Oregon and Washington and over to Vancouver in '39 when I was a kid, a vacation thing with the family. But, I'd never really been anywhere and I didn't want to go to the east coast. I heard it was all covered with snow. [laughter] I didn't want to be an aerographers' mate because I was afraid I'd

wind up in Alaska. I hated cold weather. So, I turned down the opportunity to become an aerographers' mate. It was a sixteen week school, and they said I might even get a third class rating out of the school. I said, "No, I want to wait and see if I get picked up for quartermaster-signal school."

They said, "Well, what if you don't get picked up? Then you don't get a school."

I said, "Then I'll go to sea as a seaman and I'll strike aboard ship for signalman." Because I'd learned everything [from my friend Bob], I was a qualified signalman before I even went in the Navy.

"Strike for" means you put in for . . . ?

You work toward it. When you are an apprentice in any rating you are called a striker; you're striking for the next highest rating.

I got selected for quartermaster-signal school. It was very boring for me, they were teaching us things I already knew. I was really good with semaphore flags. I had learned what we called short cuts, where you can send signals using abbreviations. For "you", we would just send the letter "U", and for "are," we'd send the letter "R", and things like that. We would hide flags behind us and we'd spin them and all these fancy things, which was not kosher in the school, you know. They wanted you to do everything just by the book.

Some of the chief instructors saw that I was a capable signalman already. They put me to work doing their work while they would go goof off somewhere—like over to the chief's club to have a beer. All three chiefs were pretty much alcoholic. One of them was what we would call Asiatic; he'd been a signalman in the Asiatic Fleet. They used to be what was called a steady light man. When you're receiving a blinker light message,

you'd keep your light on as long as you're receiving, instead of dashing each time to acknowledge the word. Well, you just keep the light on and these other guys would just keep sending messages as fast as they can. They call them steady light men. This one chief, he was so Asiatic that his eyes were constantly blinking like this and we were always trying to read whether he was sending a message or something. [laughter]

They put me to work instructing. The only thing I had a problem with was flashing light. I couldn't get the hang of flashing light, because Bob had never taught me that. And so, this one Asiatic chief with the blinking eyes took me aside one day and said, "You're going to come in at night and we're going to make a light man out of you yet. You're trying too hard to read each individual letter. Just relax and let your eyes watch and it will come to you." Sure enough, I just sat there, and boy, I just started reading those things like crazy.

Well, all signalmen are pretty much swaggerers. We had a certain walk and we were what are called right-arm rates. Back in those days there were only seven rates where you wore your rating badge on your right sleeve. All the rest were left arm rates. And so the seven right arm rates were kind of special people. A right arm rate was really a seagoing rate. There's very few shore duty opportunities. They included gunner's mates, fire control men, torpedo men, and signalmen. We were very proud of the fact that we were right arm rates. We always walked with our hats on the back of our head or way down over one eye; because we were salty.

We had a first class signalman who was one of the instructors and boy, he was really a ladies' man. He had curly hair and skintight tailor-made uniforms. This guy's name was R.R. Dice. I'll never forget him. But he was a hot dog. One day we were out on the signal

bridge. They had two buildings across the grinder from each other, and they had what they call the artificial bridge, with flags, bags with the signal flags, the masks with the yardarms for the flag hoists, and the blinker lights—eight inch signal lights. We'd split the group in half and we'd send messages back and forth, practicing. We were having a cigarette break one day, and Dice came out. I didn't know he'd come back out onto the bridge. I was standing up on the duck boards just showing off for the guys with my flags. I was doing "Remember Pearl Harbor," where you dip the flags behind you and everything, and "Manila Milkman," where you hold one flag here and all the other letters are made by moving this flag. He was watching me and pretty soon, "Kincade," he says, "you think you're a pretty good signalman, don't you?"

"Well, not really."

"Yes, you do. You're up there showing off. We'll see how good a signalman you are. Get your flags and go to the other building. Take a guy with you as a recorder to record the message."

We go over to the other building and this kid's telling me, "Boy, you're in trouble now."

We get over there and Dice waves his flags. He wants to send a message. I give him a "King" the K flag, it means go ahead and send your message. He starts out real slow, almost sarcastically, and then he starts getting faster and faster. Well, I'm holding my "Charlie" flag up there; instead of a steady light you hold the flag for C up there, it shows that you're receiving. When you don't get a word you drop your flag and they repeat it. Or you can send what is called "IMI." The letters IMI mean repeat the word or portion of the word that you indicate. So, I'm holding my Charlie flag up and he's going faster and faster and faster and he's damn near flying, and I'm still reading everything he sends. Finally he gives

me a very sarcastic King to go ahead. So, I do the same thing to him. I start very slow, then start going a little faster, and he's holding his Charlie flag up here and finally I'm sending real fast. He drops his flag. From then on I'm at the top of his hit list. But, fortunately, the three chiefs looked out for me and I think they told him to soft pedal it.

While I was in boot camp I had a top bunk by the table where we used to roll our uniforms and tie them off, and where all the guys would sit to write letters home. Since San Diego was my home town, I had no need to write letters home, and we couldn't make phone calls while we were in boot camp. I'd sit up on my bunk and talk with the guys who were sitting there writing letters. This one night this young fellow, Ted Theodos, was sitting there writing a letter. He had his wallet open on the table, I looked down and saw a picture of a good looking girl in his wallet, and said, "Hey, Ted is that your wife?"

He said, "No. I'm not married."

I said, "Oh, your girlfriend?"

He said, "No, it's my cousin."

I said, "Sure, all sailors carry their cousin's picture in their wallet. Who is it?"

He said, "No, I'm serious, it's my cousin."

I said, "Well, if it's your cousin, then give me her address."

He said, "You know, she always said she would like to meet someone from southern California." So, he writes her address and gives it to me. I put it in my writing portfolio and forgot about it.

Meanwhile, my brother had joined the Navy and he was in boot camp. I used to go visit him wearing my little signal striker's badge. I was a big deal now, a second class seaman instead of an apprentice seaman.

While we were in school we had lockers. The day we finished school they told us to clear out our lockers and put our sea bags

together. In those days, everything we owned went into a canvas sea bag. We were also issued a canvas hammock, two light blankets, a small pillow and a thin mattress. We would lay the hammock out and we would put the mattress on it, fold the blankets, put them there, put the pillow on in, and we'd then roll that thing crossways like a cigar and wrap it around our sea bag. We had the ropes, we called them clews, that you'd hang the hammock up with. We would bring that around and do a half hitch around, and then we'd take a rope and put seven half hitches around it, and then everything we owned was in this big bundle that we would hoist up onto our shoulders.

The day before we'd had our graduation ceremony. They had announced who the top five percent of the students were in the class, and they were automatically promoted to third class signalman. I was one of those promoted. We had been given a dream sheet to put down our choices of what kind of duty we wanted, and on what kind of ship. I had put on there: light cruiser, heavy cruiser, PT boat. Those were my three choices. The commanding officer of the school's command announced the promotions. He said, "Now, I know that you all have your hearts set on going into ships in the fleet, but we just had an urgent call for signalmen to man armed merchant ships in the Atlantic Ocean. This whole class is going to be assigned to the Armed Guard Atlantic and tomorrow you will all be put in a train and shipped back to New York to get your assignments. Those of you who have been promoted to third class will now go get your uniforms and go over to the tailor shop and get your third class rating badges sewn on."

Well, I was in a hurry to get over to the telephone to call home to tell them where I was going, so I was one of the last guys to

take my uniforms over to the uniform shop and, as a result, they didn't have time to change the stripes. I still had the Apprentice Seaman's Stripe on my dress jumper cuffs, and the white watch stripe, or what we used to call "pussy stripe." If you were in the seaman branch you have a white stripe around your right shoulder. If you were in the fireman branch you had a red stripe around the left shoulder. We had to take that stripe off the shoulder of our dress jumpers. Then they were supposed to sew on three stripes on our cuffs. When you're a second class seaman, you get two stripes on your cuff, and when you are a first class seaman, you get three stripes, that made you a first class seaman. Nowadays, everybody has three stripes on their cuff. If you're an apprentice seaman, you have one little diagonal slash on your sleeve. If you are second class you get two slashes. If you are first class you get three slashes. They changed that after the war.

Anyway, when I picked up my uniforms I said, "You didn't do the cuffs."

She said, "We didn't have time. You had to have those uniforms out of here before we close, so we didn't have time. Get them done wherever you're going."

But, they did sew the third class crow on.

They put a third class petty officer in charge of each car on the troop train going across country, and said that we were responsible to see that we didn't lose any of our men—like going over the hill.

When I was cleaning my locker out and packing my seabag, my writing portfolio had fallen out on the floor and this little piece of paper with this girl's name and address slid out. I had nothing to do to kill some time while I'm waiting, so I drop her a line. She lived in San Francisco. Her response caught up with me a couple of months later in New York. It was the beginning of a courtship

by mail. I never met her in person until December of '44.

You first wrote to her, when?

In June of '42.

When did you first go into the Navy?

I was actually sworn in on February 17, 1942.

How long was boot camp?

I think it was twelve weeks and then signal school was sixteen weeks. I graduated from signal school on June 2, 1942.

Immediately after graduation, within in a couple of days, you're on the train?

The day after graduation we were on the train. June fourth or sixth, somewhere around there, we were actually on the train heading toward New York. It was five days and five nights of sitting up in day coaches; they were the old straight, ninety degree angle, mohair seats. They had such a demand for troop trains that they pulled cars out of the boneyard. I swear that some of the trains that I rode in during the war years were trains that Jesse James and his gang had robbed at one time or another.

Still had the bullet holes in the side? [laughter]

Yes. Well, they still had gas lamps and they had little coal burning, pot belly stoves at one end. The windows never closed and the winter snow would come in and build up inside of the window and it would be freezing. But, that was June when we left San Diego.

What was your opinion of boot camp?

I was in my element. First off, I had spent three years in the Army ROTC. I had gone up through the ranks to captain. I knew military close order drill. I knew the manual of arms. In fact, I could do the Queen Anne Manual of Arms, which was really fancy, you know, spinning the guns and everything. There were no surprises for me in boot camp. In fact, I was disappointed that they didn't make me the company square knot petty officer or assistant petty officer. Instead, they took an older guy. He was a house painter from Las Vegas, named Grellman. They made him the square knot commander of our group. He didn't know his left foot from his right foot, and he was obese. About a month into boot camp, they came and got him for failure to pay child support; took him away and we never saw him again. The assistant square knot admiral took over. They made me the company clerk because I could type. But, it just bugged me. I had been in charge of a company of ROTC cadets and I knew how to drill them and all that. I had been in the Boy Scouts. When I got out of the scouts, I lacked two merit badges to be an eagle scout. I could tie knots like a veteran.

Seriously, was that really a part of your training, tying knots in the Navy?

Oh, absolutely. We did knots. Of course, they accelerated boot camp and I think my boot camp was only nine weeks, when I think about it now. They accelerated boot camp because they needed to get guys out to the fleet.

But, yes, I fit right in. I think some of the guys didn't like me because I was so at ease and efficient and everything. We had some real characters in the company. I made some real good friends. We had a San Francisco

police officer in boot camp. I heard he got killed in the war. I don't know for sure what happened to him, I could never locate him in San Francisco after the war. But he was an older guy. We called him Pappy. We had an older gent in signal school by the name of Foulger, and I'll be talking about him along the line here. But Pappy Foulger was, I think, forty-seven years old when he volunteered for service. We had some real interesting people.

Could he keep up?

Oh, yes. We helped him keep up. [laughter] I was a skinny little kid; jeez, I was only 127 pounds. I think I had about a twenty-seven inch waist when I went in the Navy.

Our chief was a chief signalman with about six hash marks.

Hash marks represent two years of service or three years of service?

Each hash mark was four years and his were all gold. If you had good conduct for sixteen years, then you got to wear gold hash marks and a gold rating badge.

He was a little short guy, about five foot four. He was like a little banty rooster. He had been in the sun so much, his skin was like leather. He was so short that when we'd march in review and he had to wear a sword, it would drag. We used to kid him about throwing sparks. [laughter]. But he was a tough taskmaster.

The company commanders in boot camp had a real good thing. They would sell us a bucket and a scrub brush and a bar of salt water soap for doing our laundry. When we finished boot camp we had to turn them all in. Well, naturally they sold them again. I don't know how many times our buckets got sold. [laughter] They closed the naval

training centers in San Diego just last year and I imagine my bucket is still there and it's probably . . .

. . . been sold thousands of times.

. . . hundreds of thousands of times, probably, over the years. That was one of the rackets.

The other racket was the assistant company commander would come around and take up a contribution at graduation to buy a present for the chief. It wasn't: "How much do you want to give?" It was: "You will." We were getting twenty-one dollars a month in boot camp. Before we got our twenty-one dollars a month, they took out five dollars for a canteen book for the Exchange. If you wanted to buy soap or shaving gear or cigarettes or whatever, they took it out of a canteen book. They took out six dollars and fifty cents for life insurance. It was sixty-five cents a thousand and we'd get ten thousand dollars worth of life insurance. They also strongly suggested that we have a five dollar deduction for a war bond. So we didn't have much money left over come payday. And then they came around and wanted a five dollar contribution for the chief, you know, for his going away appreciation present.

We had guys that would screw up. Then they would punish everybody. Their favorite trick was to break us out, like at two o'clock in the morning, in our underwear. They'd just give us enough time to put our shoes on, grab our rifles and our seabags, and fall in. We'd have to tie our seabag to the muzzle of our rifle and then put our rifle on our shoulder and they'd march us around the grinder. Well, I'll tell you, that seabag got heavier and heavier with every step.

So your seabag was always packed and ready to go?

Oh, yes. We lived out of that seabag. There was an order in which it was packed, you know. You had a flat hat, which is the dark blue, east coast, Donald Duck hat, and that was folded with the part that went around the head folded under. You'd put that on the bottom of the seabag. Then your dress blues would go on top of that, then your undress blues, your whites, your underwear and then your towels. Everything in place. We had to fold and roll all of our clothing. Our underwear, they call them skivvies, we'd roll up into a little tube, and then tie it off with little cords they call clothes stops. They're like shoelaces. They had little brass eyelets or anklets on either end of them. They came as a long piece of cord with these little brass things, two together, and you would cut between the two and get [something] like a shoelace. Once you rolled your whites or your blues or whatever, then you'd tie them with these little things; I remember we tied them with a square knot. Everything had to be stenciled in a certain way and in a certain place. Everything was very routine.

We had one guy, a duty scrounge, which I suppose every company had. Our's was from Texas. His name was Bowie. He was from Bowie, Texas. His great grandfather founded the town. Bowie didn't think you had to take a bath more than once a year, whether you needed it or not. He didn't believe in washing his clothes. So when the aroma got too bad, a bunch of us jumped him and took him into the shower. We scrubbed him with the scrub brushes—and I mean they had stiff bristles—till he bled. The chief came in and saw what was happening and got very upset, not with us, but with Bowie. [laughter] Bowie had, like, a sixth grade education; he wasn't a too smart guy. The chief made him go open his locker and empty his seabag out on the deck. Then he had all us guys put our shoes on, and he

marched us back and forth over all his clothes. Then he told Bowie to go out and scrub them until they were sparkling white.

Did that change him? Did it work?

No, it didn't change him. It made him very sullen. Finally, they took him away for a psychiatric evaluation and he never came back to the company. Now, I don't know if they put him in a later company or booted him out as an undesirable or what. But, yes . . .

So, do you ever wonder if they set things up so that people have to go through this kind of an experience as a way to get everyone to solve this kind of a problem together?

No, I think its endemic. I think it just happens. It's your standard bell curve.

There's a cleanliness bell curve?

Yes.

There's an intelligence bell curve.

And there's an appetite bell curve, and you name it. [laughter]

Then there was another guy in our group, a guy named Paul Levine, whose uncle owned a theater up in San Francisco. It turned out that this young lady that I wrote to all those years and finally married knew him, because his uncle's theater was just within walking distance to her house and she used to go there all the time. Levine was a real cut up. I mean, he was just crazy. One evening before lights out, one guy was already in his bunk. Levine runs over and puts his head under the guy's blankets and bites him on the leg just for a joke, you know. As he did it, the chief walked in. The chief thought we had

a blazing homosexual. So they took Levine off and they ran him through psychiatric evaluation. They released him, but he wound up in the company behind us because he had missed a couple weeks of training. [laughter]

One night, before they took Bowie away, he became curious about the fire extinguisher. He had never seen a CO₂ extinguisher. So he took it off the wall rack, dropped it, and the damn thing went off and sprayed CO₂ all over the entryway of the barracks. The chief came in and saw that. That night he had us all fall out in our underwear and in our boots. It was terribly foggy and cold. He fell us into formation and said, "OK, now who did that?" Nobody would tell. Bowie wouldn't admit that he did it. He was terrified. So the chief said, "OK, go back in and get your rifles." We got our rifles out. He made us hold our rifles overhead and run around the grinder until somebody would tell—nobody would. Guys were passing out and falling down and cussing Bowie but nobody squealed. Several guys came down with pneumonia, so the chief got in trouble over that.

That was the experience of boot camp. It was a process of converting people from civilians into military people; to learn to take orders, to not question orders, to respond immediately and question later.

This kind of stuff is real team building stuff.

Exactly.

You're all in this together no matter what; if somebody makes a mistake, you all suffer for it.

Yes. What one pays, you all pay. It's not fair, but it works. When you have a limited amount of time in which to convert people, you'll go to drastic measures to do it.

Whoever your drill instructors were, they had to be pretty good at recognizing opportunities to teach lessons.

They were just old sea dogs in those days. It's different now. They used to be able to torture us, actually. If you did something they didn't like, they'd make you put your bucket on your head and then they'd take their swagger stick and beat on the bucket. You can't do that today. You can't use obscenities. You can't degrade recruits or abuse them physically or verbally.

Do you think that they will be able to accomplish the same purpose in getting somebody ready for combat?

It's the difference between permissive training and authoritarian training. I think in the military you need authority. When you lose authority . . . I think we've become so liberal, so overly protective . . . Take kids today that are involved in criminal acts. When you confront the parents, the parents get highly indignant. "Not my child. Who do you think you are?" The parents will not admit [their child is at fault] because they know that the underlying cause is their own shortcomings. I don't think we'll ever come back around. I think "Popularity Jack," Admiral Zumwalt, was the beginning of the end for the Navy as far as esprit de corps and authority and control.

We're at about June eleventh or June twelfth and you've just spent five days coming across the country by train.

OK. They took us off the train (we'd pulled into Grand Central Station) and they had the ever present Navy paneled, or stake, truck. We threw all of our seabags and hammocks

into the truck and then we climbed over the stake sides and sat on top of all of our gear. They drove us through downtown Manhattan. I never saw such tall buildings in my life; fourteen stories was the tallest building I had ever seen, I think. We went right down Wall Street and past the Empire State building. All of us were staring. The kids from the farms and from Texas, especially, were staring with their eyes wide open at these huge buildings. In fact, one guy said, looking at one of the buildings, I guess it was the Empire State Building, "That would hold a lot of hay. [laughter]"

They drove us down to South Brooklyn to a section called Bay Ridge on First Avenue and Fifty-second Street to what used to be the Naval Reserve Armory, which was a huge hangar-like building and [a second] big brick building right on the Hudson River, that was now the Armed Guard Center. No, excuse me; first they took us to the infamous Pier Ninety-one right in downtown New York.

Just one pier away, Pier Ninety-two, was where the *Normandy* was lying on her beams' ends. I remember she was sabotaged and set afire so they scuttled her to save the ship and had rolled her over onto her side. The Coast Guard were standing guard over that ship. This ship's lying on her side and on the beams they had several guard shacks. Coast Guardsmen in their leggings and pea jackets were guarding the ship with rifles against any further sabotage.

So they took us to Pier Ninety-one and unloaded us there and said we were there until further assignment. That pier was under the command of a Commander Simpson, who stole the Prince of Wales' wife, Wallis Warfield Simpson, away from the prince and married her. She wore his stripes, you know what I mean. He had a vehicle with a driver and a little flag on the front fender with the C.O.'s emblem; it was a little eagle.

This Pier Ninety-one was a long tin-shack covered pier where they used to load ships. There were railroad tracks going the length of the pier. When you first go in the entrance to the pier, there they had the administrative offices and everything. Then you went further in, and on one side they had steam tables, and tables and benches for the meals. On the other side they had row upon row of army cots.

This pier had been a commercial pier, but now they had two old Navy ships alongside, from World War I, or I think one of them was from the Spanish American war, an old battle cruiser. They had the *USS Oregon* and the *USS Olympia* tied up alongside, and these were now prison ships. Any sailors who were court martialed or awaiting court martial, or that had been sentenced, were serving time on these prison ships. They kept them occupied all day long. They would start at the stern of the ship with chipping hammers and they would chip paint all the way up to the bow. Then they'd go back aft and they'd get steel brushes and then they'd wire brush it all the way forward. Then they'd go back and they'd get the yellow chromate paint and they'd yellow chromate the deck. By this time the paint was dry, and now they'd put on a coat of grey paint. And then they'd go back and start chipping the paint. [laughter] That's all they did chip, wire brush, and paint—chip, wire brush, and paint. That was their punishment. Those prison ships were right there as a warning that you could be next.

When we first were unloaded there—golly, I forget how many of us there were; there must have been a hundred of us—we were all huddled together like chicks wondering what's going to happen next. And here I am, out of uniform. Our dress blues, the jumpers, when you put them on, the bottom hem of the jumper went all the way down to your knees, but there was a drawstring and so

you'd double it up around your waist and tie it tight. Then you could carry cigarettes and stuff down in the loop that made until you got a chance to get them altered, where you get them cut off and hemmed. And the blouse with sleeves was very long. There I am with a third class petty officer's rating and an apprentice seaman's stripe on my cuff. I'm real afraid that I'm going to get caught. I'm out of uniform, so I bloused my sleeve over that cuff so you could see that one stripe, but you couldn't tell there wasn't three of them. Here comes a little commander walking down the pier (and I don't know if it was Simpson or who the hell it was), but the little short commander goes walking down past our group. He's got his hands in his pockets and he's looking down at his feet as he's walking. I'm getting into the middle of the group so he's not going to see me. All of a sudden he stops and without looking up or anything he just points and says, "You, come here!"

We're all looking around at each other and I said, "Me?". [laughter]

He said, "You! The signalmen rating badge, come here!"

"Me, sir?"

"Yes, you," [laughter]

So I go over there and he says, "What the hell are you, anyway? Are you a kind of seaman or are you a third class petty officer?"

"I'm a third class petty officer, sir." I visually see me chipping paint. [laughter] He calls for the master at arms so I know I'm going to go on report. So I explained, "We got promoted the day before we got on the train to come back here and they didn't have time to put seaman's stripes on my cuff."

The master at arms comes over and the commander says, "I want you to get this man's name and I want you to give him a special liberty pass tonight so he can go ashore and get his uniform properly fixed." [laughter]

Then he looks at me, and he says, "Son, there's a hundred tailor shops right out the front gate. I'm sure you can find one that will fix your uniform." I was the only one of our group that got liberty that night. So I went out, got my stripes on, and went into New York City and saw Manhattan and Times Square for the first time.

Commander Simpson's wife would ride in his vehicle with his driver, the length of the pier and back. And God help the sailor that didn't stop, come to attention, and salute as she drove by. If you didn't, she told the driver, "Stop the car. Get that man's hat." The driver would take the guy's hat, and she'd turn it into the master at arm's shack. The hat would have the guy's name and service number. They'd pass the word for him to report and he'd get five days chipping paint because he didn't salute the old man's wife. Somebody later blew the whistle to Walter Winchell, the reporter. Winchell at the time was a reserve commander, but not on active duty at that time. Somebody wrote to him about the commander's wife. The commander was summarily detached and sent to sea and that made a lot of guys happy.

A couple of days later, they piled us back on the ubiquitous Navy stake truck and took us down First Avenue and Fifty-second Street to the Naval Armed Guard Center in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. There we were to be trained in merchant signals and assigned to armed merchant ships operating in convoys. At that time, before the Armed Guard took over, the reserve center was used as a British Navy survival and small craft pool. When we got there, there were several hundred British sailors in the building. The building was quite unique in itself. They had literally hundreds of triple deck bunks. They had divided them into the British side, which was the south side of the building, and the American side,

which was the north side. Those two sides were divided by a pathway that was about ten to twelve feet wide. It had a hardwood floor. We used to play basketball, drill and everything on that.

The bathrooms, the heads, were downstairs—no privacy. They had just several rows of vitreous enamel toilets that did not have toilet seats. In other words, the seat was just a molded part of the toilet. Talk about cold in the winter. [chuckles]. There'd be a line of guys sitting on the toilet and just in front of them there'd be a line of sinks with guys shaving. I mean, they really took it down to its very basics. You got about three minutes . . .

Hadn't you got used to that from boot camp?

We were accepting of it. I don't think we liked it. I certainly didn't. Some of the other guys, probably, came from a home that had a three holer outside; it wasn't nothing new to them. But I always grew up with a door on my bathroom. So that was kind of hard to accept.

New York was a great, great liberty town. If you were wearing a uniform, people would buy you drinks. They never asked you for an I.D. card when you went in. Of course, I didn't drink because I had an alcoholic stepfather. We always had booze in the house and I couldn't stand the smell of it, and couldn't stand the taste of beer. I just had no desire for alcohol. I didn't smoke.

While I was in high school, I worked two jobs. I worked in the Midway Market, which we called a supermarket, but by today's standards it wasn't much. I also was working in a photography studio as an apprentice photographer. The guy I worked for was very brokenhearted that I didn't become a photographer's mate in the Navy because he was training me to be a press photographer.

But anyway, I got to uptown New York. Right at Times Square they had a big flashing sign—that even David Letterman has things on now—in that corner; it's kind of a triangular corner. They had the Pepsi-Cola Service Center. You could go there and you got free hamburgers, free Pepsi-Colas, writing paper, entertainment tickets, show tickets, and things like that. It was just a neat place to go when you didn't have money, which we didn't.

Letters had become important to you by now?

Yes, I was a letter writer. And I went to USO dances. I went to the Stage Door Canteen. I went to the Roseland Ballroom. Of course you had to pay for your tickets there, but everything else was free. I dated a lot of interesting young ladies. One of them became very, very serious. Boy she wanted to get married! I thought, well, she's just after that ten thousand dollars in insurance, you know. When I shipped out, I wrote my mother and I said, "Hey, write to this gal and tell her that you just got word that my ship went down and I'm missing at sea," which she did. She didn't want to lie about it, but she did, just to get me off the hook.

A couple of years later, one of my classmates up at Yale went on liberty down in New York and he comes back and he says, "God, I met the nicest gal. I went up to her house and met her mother. Your picture was on top of their radio and I asked her, 'Gee, is that guy's name Paul?'"

She said "Oh, yes. He was my fiancée and he was lost at sea."

He said to me, "Jeez, I thought that was strange, but I kept my mouth shut." [laughter]

But New York was a great, great liberty town.

We were at the Armed Guard Center when they issued our first orders. The Naval

Armed Guard was actually created in late 1941, when they started putting gunners mates on these different ships. The armed guard was not a new concept, it had actually been established in World War I. It was quite effective, so they re-instituted it in '42. They started running all the troops and the war materials over to Europe in convoys, because the German submarine fleet had grown tremendously. They were operating off the east coast of the United States; they had become that bold! So they started arming the ships with deck guns and American gun crews. There were also British gun crews called DEMS aboard the British ships. Because we needed to communicate between ships, and in a common language, they put signalmen on all of the merchant ships. The radiomen went aboard merchant ships only as part of the convoy commodore staff. I served on nine different ships, under five different flags: I served on American, British, Panamanian, Dutch, and Norwegian merchant ships.

The merchant marine, at that time, was really the bottom strata of society. The crew were mission bums and bindle stiffs; they were rough, tough, and rowdy. They'd get big salaries because not only did they get basic union wages, but if they had to work past a certain time, they had to get overtime. The gun crew would fill in with merchant seamen. When the gunnery officer asked the commanding officer to assign some of the merchant crewman to the gun crew, to teach them how to handle the ammunition in case we had casualties, the shop steward would come down and say, "You are not using my men after four-thirty, or we're going to have to pay them double over-time." It was pretty bad.

And they would get bonuses. If they went over a certain longitude or latitude that put them in a different combat classification area, they'd get a bonus. If the ship was carrying

high explosives, they would get a bonus. If they went into a port that was determined to have inadequate anti-aircraft protection or anti-submarine protection, they got a bonus.

Did you resent that they got bonuses when you were making twenty-one dollars a month?

Oh, I was making more than that, because now I was third class and later on second class; I was making seventy-eight dollars a month and then, ninety-six dollars a month, plus five percent sea pay. But you're damn right I resented it! And I resent it today, because they used to ridicule us, they'd call us stupid. "You guys are on the same ship we are, you're going through the same thing we are, and they are paying you peanuts . . . you're stupid!"

They've just given merchant mariners veteran status, so now they get the veterans' benefits. I wrote a letter to the editor, which never got published—I was in San Diego at the time—but I said, "I want to know, now that they are getting equal status with us as veterans, are they paying back all the bonuses and overtime pay they got to equalize the pay that we got?" They used to steal us blind.

My first ship was a brand new liberty ship I picked up down in Philadelphia, the *Thomas Sumter*. Thomas Sumter was one of the signatories of the Constitution. We went from Philadelphia down to Charleston and took on some ammunition. We went to Norfolk, Virginia, and took on some more ammunition there, then back up to New York to take on our cargo. On the way up to New York, a submarine fired two torpedoes at us. The lookout alerted us to the torpedoes off the port beam, and, like a bunch of fools, we all ran to the port beam to look. I learned later you could get killed going to the same side as the torpedoes are coming; I lost a good friend who had done that. Because we were heading

out, taking our cargo in, we were riding high in the water and the torpedoes passed under us. We took evasive action, and being light, we were able to make better speed. Everybody immediately pulled out a cigarette and lit up. I went over to a guy and said, "Give me one of those."

He said, "You don't smoke."

And I said, "I do now!" They all looked so relieved when they took that big puff of smoke . . . and the first puff always smelled good . . . so that's when I started smoking. Twenty-three years later I kicked it.

We got to New York and a guy says, "We're gonna go ashore and get a beer."

I said, "Wait, I'll go with you." And that's the first time I drank a beer, and enjoyed it.

The ship was going to Murmansk, [Russia]. They gave us what they call foul weather gear. When they put us on board we didn't even have foul weather jackets, so we wore our pea jackets and our turtleneck sweaters. The Red Cross gave us knit gloves and scarves. And they did give us a felt-lined face mask. So we went, heading toward Murmansk. We were in a convoy of about sixty-seven ships. When we got up into the ice fields, the welding began to split. We took on water and went back down to New York. Meanwhile, something like thirty-five ships got through. The rest were sunk, either by submarine wolf packs or Stuka dive bombers, when they got closer to the land up north.

They re-routed our ship to India. We stopped at Guantánamo Bay and at Trinidad. When we got to Trinidad, they wouldn't let the merchant crewman go ashore, but they let the Navy gun crew and signalmen go ashore. The merchant seamen resented that. We had an oil barge alongside pumping oil, and so the merchant seaman went into our compartments, they took our shaving lotion, they stole our record player and our records,

and anything else that was loose, and bartered it to the natives on the oil barge for rum. We had left a seaman on board to guard the ammunition-ready lockers and the guns. We issued him a .45 automatic to protect himself with. Of course, nobody ever taught us how to load or use a .45, but we had them. We had a gun crew of seven men, I believe. There was a third class coxswain named Snodgrass in charge of the gun crew. He and I had gone ashore together. The other guys went ashore and got drunk and went to the cat houses and all that. When we got back aboard, we were the only ones that were sober. We looked around for the guy we had left on watch and he was nowhere to be found. I went up to the forward gun tub and he was passed out up there. He was in his underwear. He had thrown up all over the deck there, and his gun was missing. I went back and told Snodgrass I'd found him and what had happened.

He said "Jeez, we've got to get that gun. I'm signed out for that gun." We went to the little armory and we each got a .45 and strapped it on. Like I said, I didn't even know how to use it. He and I searched the merchant crew's compartments . . .

What weapon were you trained with? In basic training, they must have taught you to fire something, didn't they?

Yes. We fired a .22 rifle. We each got, I think it was, ten shots with a .22 rifle at a small range right at the Naval Training Center. That was the only firearms I trained with. They said "You're not going to be shooting a gun on board ship. You don't need training." So they pretty much eliminated that.

Snodgrass and I put on the guns when we went looking for the seaman watch. I went into the mess hall and there was a quartermaster named Herb Rawlins there.

Because I was up on the bridge all the time, he was teaching me to steer the ship and also teaching me the stars. We became good friends. I went into the mess hall and he was in there with another merchant seaman named Whitey Floto. They were both very drunk. I told Herb that we were looking for the gun, did he know anything about it? He said, "No, but the crewmen are all drunk. You better go to your compartment." I was in the pilot's cabin up by the bridge. I had a room to myself. The armed guard gun crew had their compartment back aft under the deck gun. "You had better go to your room and lock yourself in."

I said "I can't. We're looking for the gun."

We had a lieutenant, j.g., named Richmond Gray from Richmond, Virginia. He was the gunnery officer. I went to his state room and knocked on his door and told him it was me and he said, "Go to your room and lock the doors. It's not safe. These men are crazy."

I said, "We've got to find the .45."

He said, "Mind your own business. Go to bed."

So I said "Well, heck with you," and I went looking for the gun. Down in the mess hall, Herb told me I had better get in my room because these guys were off their nut, and particularly angry at the armed guard crew because we got to go ashore and they didn't. About that time, Whitey Floto took a swing at me. First he said, "Who do you think you are? You can go ashore and I can't. You're not better than I am." And he took a swing at me. He was so drunk, he missed. Herb picked up a big crockery milk pitcher and hit him over the head with it, knocked him out and split his scalp, which bled all over.

So he told me, "You had better get to bed."

I said, "I will when we find the gun."

I got hold of Snodgrass and the two of us went to the merchant mariners' compartment.

We were turning mattresses over and we found the gun and the webbed belt under one of the mattresses. We took it, and then we went up and got the seaman, and we carried him back and put him in his bunk. Then I headed back and as I walked across the after well deck, I stepped into something wet. I looked down and there was about two inches of fuel oil on the deck. What had happened, everybody had gotten drunk and passed out. When the fuel tanks got filled from the oil barge, the oil came up through the overflow pipes and flooded the well deck. I woke up the chief engineer and told him what had happened. He got some guys to come down and get sawdust out and start sopping it up. So I'm walking toward the ladder to go up to my compartment, and Floto now has come to. He's sitting on top of a hatch and as I walked by, he called me, "Hey, Kincade! Come here!"

I asked, "What do you want?"

He said, "I want to apologize."

I said, "No apologies necessary."

He said, "No, I want to apologize. I'm sorry. I want to shake your hand."

I said, "You don't have to do that."

He said, "I said I want to shake your hand!"

So I reached out to shake his hand and behind his back he was holding a marlin spike and he tried to stab me. So I grabbed his wrist. I pulled the gun out, and if I had known what I was doing, I'd have shot him. But I didn't know what I was doing and I was terrified; I was only seventeen. So I start whacking at him with the gun. By this time, he's hanging on to my shirt. I beat him down to his knees and I'm still beating him. The chief engineer finally saw what I was doing and he came over and grabbed me. He said, "You're killing him." Well, I almost completely scalped him. He had one eye laying out on his cheek. So

they called for an ambulance boat and took him off to a hospital. The chief told me, "You had better get to your room."

Meanwhile, I had taken the .45 that we had retrieved and I had strapped that on, so I had two .45's. I went up to my room and locked the door. I'm sitting there wondering what do I do now? The next thing I know, people are kicking at the door. They wanted to get to me. They wanted to kill me. I'm terrified and I'm telling them, "I've got two guns here. Open the door and I'm going to shoot right through the door." I sat up all night guarding the door. Every once in a while, somebody would come by and kick the door and tell me to come out.

Early morning, one of the seaman, a kid named Johnson—we used to call him "Farmboy" and he taught me how to play cribbage—knocks on the door. Some of the armed guard guys wanted to get me, too, for reporting to the lieutenant what happened. And so Farmer comes and knocks on the door and he says, "Let me in."

I said, "Whose side are you on?" [laughter]

He said, "I'm on your side."

I let him in and we sat in there and we played cards for the rest of the night. I didn't know what the hell I was going to do. These guys would tell me, "Well, we can't get you now, but you've got to come out sometime, and you're going over the side."

Somebody, apparently when they took Floto to the hospital, reported it. The next thing I know, about eight o'clock in the morning, somebody's knocking on the door. I said, "Who's there?"

He said, "Bos'n's Mate so and so from the Port Director's office."

I said, "You got any I.D.?"

"Yes."

"Slide it under the door." So here comes an I.D. card under the door and a picture of

a guy who's second class bos'n's mate. "What do you want?"

"I'm here to take you off the ship and into protective custody."

"Thank god!" Farmer and I packed my gear up. He carried my seabag and hammock down to the Jacob's ladder. They didn't have an accommodation ladder, they had a rope ladder going down. I'm walking just like in a movie with two guns out. [laughter]. I didn't know how to shoot either of them, but told them, if anybody comes near me, I'm going to kill them. We lowered my gear down to the boat.

Then Snodgrass says, "Hey, you can't take those guns with you. I'm in charge of them."

I said, "You lower a line down and when I get in the boat, I'll send them back up."

I get down in the boat and the bos'n's mate said, "Let me see those guns. You don't even have a clip in those. They're not even loaded." [laughter]

I said, "It doesn't make a difference. I wouldn't have known how to use them."

They took me off and they reassigned me. I wound up, like I said, on several ships.

You said you were on five ships, which means that you made five crossings with the merchant marines?

No, I was on ten different ships, but under five different flags. I'd maybe go from New York to Trinidad. Then maybe the ship going from Trinidad, maybe over to New Orleans, or somewhere down to Peru or something like that, wouldn't be going in convoy, so they didn't need a signalman, and they'd pull me off. The gun crews would stay as a unit and they may have stayed on one ship through the whole war and gone around the world on it. A lot of people I know did. They stayed as a unit. The signalmen jumped from ship to ship and they'd keep pulling me off.

I was assigned to a commodore's staff down in Trinidad. The convoy commodore took the best ship, the biggest and best ship, for his own flag ship. Then the vice commodore would take the next best ship. We were on the next best ship and when we got ready to get underway, the commodore's ship had an engine failure. He sent us a message telling us to move to another ship, he was taking our ship. So we changed ships and that night, when we shipped out going through the Windward Passage, the ship [we had been on] was torpedoed. Pappy Foulger, who was the older guy in the signal school, had taken my place there and was killed.

Another time, I was down in Trinidad and got assigned to a ship, the *Macabi*, which was a United Fruit Company banana boat. While we were waiting for the truck to come pick us up, three of us were sitting on our seabags playing knock rummy. Chief Fess, from New York City, who was in charge of this little convoy control unit—it was nothing more than a two story h-shaped barracks, a mess hall building, and a little coke shack—came out and said, "Any of you guys going to New York?"

We said, "We don't know."

He said, "Well, I want to give you my wife's address and phone number. If any of you hit New York, just call her up and tell her I'm OK." And he told us to tell her some things that he couldn't put in the letter because they censored the mail. He goes back in and comes out with three cokes and a box of cigars and he gave each of us a cigar. Then he drew his kitchen match, strikes it up and he started lighting our cigars. He lit mine first, Z. O. Blevins' second, and Frankie Buchert's last. As he put out the match, he said, "I hope none of you guys are superstitious."

"No."

Well, finally the truck came, took us down to the docks, and we got in the boat going out

to the anchorage. Frankie Buchert and I are sitting back in the stern sheets of the boat and he told me he had only made one trip from New York down to Trinidad. While he was waiting for another ship in Trinidad, (he was a signalman third), they came over and said, "Anybody here have a driver's license? We need a driver for the Port Director's office." Well, he had a driver's license, so they took him. He'd been in Trinidad for ten months driving. Now they were sending him back to sea so this was his second trip. He told me, "Hey, Flags, I want to give you my mom and dad's address. If something happens to me, I want you to write to them."

I said, "There's nothing going to happen to you."

He said, "I just know something's going to happen."

I said, "Aw, bullshit, we all get that feeling when we ship out. There ain't nothing going to happen."

He said, "Well, I'm not going to make it and I want you to write them a letter." I had met them when we came on the troop train through New Orleans. His family was there to meet us. In fact, his sister sent me a picture which I still have. She was a queen of something and she [in the picture] had a little tiara and a wand. [laughter]

I said, "OK, if it would make you feel better, I'll write your folks, and I'll give you my mother's address and you can write to her."

We get out to the ships and he's assigned to the *Surinam*, a huge Dutch freighter. I said, "Jeez, Frankie, look at the size of that ship! That's going to take six torpedoes to even take on water. Look at the spitkit that I'm going to over there. They're not even going to waste a torpedo there. They're going to use deck guns."

He said, "I just tell you, I'm not going to make it."

I said, "Yes you are. Don't think that way."

We got rid of him and went over to Blevins' ship, which was the *Empire Lugard*, a British freighter and another big ship. I said, "Boy, you guys got the biggies. I sure envy you." Then I get on mine.

Well, that night we went out. We went through the Windward Passage. The submarines came up from the bottom of the channel and because of the narrows, the convoy couldn't disperse. We had to steam straight ahead. By the next morning, we had lost several ships, and Frankie Buchert was killed.

I didn't know about Z. O. Blevins until a couple of months later. I went into New Orleans and at the naval station there Blevins was in the barracks mopping the deck. I saw his back and his stencil on his shirt. And I went over and tapped him on the back. He was crazy. He's shaking his head and he recognized me. What had happened, his ship went down and he got off and was in the water. They had taught us that if you're in the water, when the depth charges are dropped, to cross your legs to keep the force of the water from going up your rectum and exploding your intestines; which he had done. But he had ducked under the water because the oil was burning. While he was underwater, the depth charges did something to his head.

That made me believe in the "three on a match." The superstition that started in the war was that, when you lit the first cigarette, that let the enemy know where you were; when you lit the second cigarette, that let him set his sights; and when you lit the third cigarette, that let him pull the trigger. I was the first on the match, nothing happened to me. Z. O. Blevins was second on the match, he survived but he was loony tunes. Frankie Buchert was third on the match, and he was killed.

I wrote to his parents and I got a letter back. They said he was still alive. They resented me writing to them, so I never wrote again. I've often wondered if they ever accepted the fact [that Frankie was killed].

Five of the ships I was on were sunk three days to two weeks after I got off them. On one of them, this British freighter *King James*, we were the convoy commodore's staff. The convoy commodore was a lieutenant commander who had graduated from the Navel Academy in 1912. He did twenty years in the Navy, retired as a lieutenant commander, was on the beach for ten years, became a certified alcoholic, and was recalled back to duty for World War II. He thought he should have had a destroyer. They put him on merchant ships.

I had been in the armed guard for a year and had just made second class. On his staff he had an ensign, a fresh caught communications officer out of Harvard Signal School who couldn't read flags or flashing light. He wouldn't even let me hold the signal book because he was afraid I'd memorize the signals. I told him, "Well, you can't live with flag signals for a year and not know them by heart."

He said, "Well, that's a court martial offense, you know, to memorize the signal book."

I said, "No, that's the General Signal Book, not the merchant signal book." I had a lot of problems with him. [For staff], I had two signal strikers fresh out of signal school and a third class radioman who was making his first trip to sea. The commodore told me that I was his right hand man and that I was to consider the ensign as a passenger.

The officers were living up in the wardroom area. They put us down below, aft over the screws with the British gun crew. There was a raised platform there with three

steps and there was the commode sitting up there, like the king on the throne overlooking the realm. It was plugged up and overflowing and still in use. The stench was horrible. They served us food that first night. They gave each of us a rusty tin plate, a knife, fork, and spoon and said, "Here's your permanent mess kit. It's your responsibility to keep it clean." They served something that looked like gray matter for dinner. I went up and told the commander that I'd like us to be moved up topside, close to the bridge, so we could be available in an emergency. He got all upset. He's sitting at a table having dinner with a white tablecloth and a carafe of wine, and his booze; because they had a bar up in the officers' country.

We went to sea that night and ran into a terrible storm. We started out with about thirty ships in our convoy and lost them all in the storm. We didn't know if they'd been sunk, torpedoed, went back to port, or what. A couple of days later when it cleared up, we didn't have a ship in sight. So the commodore lost his first command totally. [laughter] When his booze ran out, he became very, very obnoxious. He still wouldn't bring us out of the quarters we were in, [and away from] the terrible food we were eating. All three of my underlings got terribly seasick. I went up and asked for some lemons and crackers for them; couldn't get it. The commodore accused me of thinking we were on a cruise; that I didn't know that there was a war on; that we were spoiled. Of course, he was living it up in the officers' country.

When we got to Guantánamo Bay, the commodore and the ensign went ashore and stayed in the BOQ [bachelor officer's quarters] until the convoy formed up again, but wouldn't let us go ashore and stay in the enlisted quarters where we could get a decent meal, a shower, see a movie, and go to the Exchange. So as soon as their boat reached the

dock and they got into the car and took off, I got on the signal light and called a doctor. They sent a hospital corpsman out and he said, "What's your problem?"

I said, "I need our quarters inspected. They're sub-standard." He took me back in, and I saw a couple of doctors there. With me I took a little box full of insects that I had collected from our bunks—you know, a wide variety—and I dumped them out on his desk. I said, "Do you know what these are?" They were poking them with a pen; they knew some of them, but some of them they had never seen before.

One of the doctor's said, "You must be on one of those limey ships out there."

"Yes, that's why I'm here!"

So this Dr. Sullivan—God love him, and I'll never forget him—went back out and inspected our compartments. I took him down to the so-called reefer, where they had dead, dry, and rotting fish on the decks. He started to throw up, "I've seen enough, let's get you off of here!" We went back over to the port director's office. Dr. Sullivan reported to the port director and declared that ship sub-standard for American navel personnel, and that we were to be transferred to another ship.

The port director said, "Very well. This is the commodore's staff?"

"Yes, it is sir."

"Well, we need to get the commodore's approval of this."

They sent for him; he's in the O club [officer's club], sucking vodka. [laughter] They bring him down. He walks into the office with a big smile on his face until he sees me. He wanted to know what the hell I was doing there. The port director explained and he got very unhappy. Anyway, the up-shot was that they sent us back to the ship.

The captain of the ship called me to his cabin and wanted to know who the naval

officer was on his ship. I told him it was a doctor. "He's examining our quarters."

He said, "This is the first time I've ever had my ship examined by an American doctor. Why did he pick my ship?"

I said, "Because I invited him."

"Who are you? You're nothing but a damned sailor."

"Yes, but I'm a damned American sailor. And I don't have to live like a pig."

He goes, "Well, what did the doctor say?"

And I said, "Well, he said (if you excuse the expression) the ship is a shitbarge!"

The captain told me to get my men and get off his ship. I said that's what I was trying to do. We're lowering our gear off the ship and the captain comes out with a change of heart and says, "Stay on board until the commodore gets back."

"Fine," I said, "I talked to him over at the port director's office and he knows about it." He figured the commodore had approved my actions. So, from Guantánamo Bay to Trinidad, neither of them spoke to each other, but both of them took turns chewing me out constantly. When we got to Trinidad—which was a British Crown Colony—the captain went ashore immediately. He went over to the British authorities and demanded the Americans be kicked off his ship; which they did. And the commodore, now, was embarrassed because everybody knew that he was a Naval Academy graduate being kicked off a British merchant ship, of all things. He was the laughing stock of the Officer's Club. He swore that he was going to hang me from the yard arm.

Meanwhile, the captain didn't want to wait for another convoy to form up, so he steamed independently. Next day, out between Trinidad and Tobago, the ship got torpedoed and sunk. Lost all hands except for the third mate and one of the British gunners.

For days, the oil drums were drifting back into Trinidad Harbor.

When we finally got back to New York, the commodore brought general court martial charges against me: six different charges, including threatening to strike an officer; which I did—not him, but the ensign. I had told the ensign that I was in enough trouble already, that striking an officer wouldn't make it any worse, and just get off my back. So he reported me to the commodore.

When I got to the armed guard center in New York he brought these charges against me. The executive officer was a mustang, an ex-bos'n's mate. He heard my side of the story, and heard my two strikers. What I didn't know at the time was that the radioman was queer. He was reporting everything that I did and said back to the ensign, who was reporting to the commodore. So anyway, the executive officer, the commander at the armed guard center, felt for me. "I'm going to ship you out immediately and I'm going to keep you and the commodore bouncing, so you won't both be in port at the same time. These charges are going to die on my desk." Which they did.

He shipped me out the next day to Boston. I picked up a ship there and that night we shipped out. We got torpedoed but didn't sink. They sent a fleet tug out, and towed us down through Long Island Sound. I had my elbow broken. Seeing how they couldn't send me back to sea, the XO asked me if I had a high school education.

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Would you take college courses?"

I said, "Oh, yes. I'd probably be B plus average."

He said, "The Navy just came out with a new program called the Navy V-12 program. It's to meet a need for officers. If you can pass a written test you might get selected and go

off to this program and everything will be forgotten."

Well, I passed the test and they sent me off to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. I did two semesters there. I didn't want a reserve commission, so I took the test for Naval ROTC and passed. They sent me down to Yale University. I spent two semesters down there. I was a poor man's son in a rich man's school. All these rich men's sons were hiding from the war. I spent more time fighting than I did studying. I decided I belonged back at sea. So they booted me out.

Sounds like you had a little bit of what we call now, an attitude.

That has been one of my problems: I have no gray areas. At Trinity there were eleven of us from the fleet, because the Navy required five percent of the cadets be from the fleet. They made me a platoon leader. I had a movie star's son in my platoon. I had a supreme court justice's son in my platoon. I had a bunch of lawyer's sons in my platoon. They made no effort to hide the fact that they thought I didn't belong there, that I was trash, and that I should be at sea with the rest of the sailors. Even the administrative officer went out of his way to tell us that he was going to see we all went back to the fleet where we belonged. You got ten demerits for anything. He gave one guy ten demerits for silent contempt just to round out his hundred demerits so he could be kicked out.

[As platoon leader], I used to tell everybody to take one step forward. When they did, I said, "Thank you everybody who took one step forward, because you just volunteered to go with me and . . . Sernoffsky, my assistant platoon leader, was also from the armed guard. (He's now

a retired school administrator living up in Canada. I visited him last year.) But I said, "All of you who just took one step forward volunteered to go with Skee and me down to the blood bank."

And Stuart Barthelmas, the movie star's son, would run to the telephone and call his father, who was a reserve lieutenant commander. He was aide to Admiral Lealry down at ComFive in Norfolk, Virginia. He called his father and said that I forced him to give a pint of blood. His father called the CO. The CO was a lieutenant; he was an insurance actuarial who didn't know zip about the Navy. But boy he could quote figures. He called me in, wanted to know why I'm ordering men to give blood.

I said, "Well, if these guys are afraid to go to war and shed their blood, least they could do is provide it to those who are brave enough to do it."

He said, "You can't do that."

I said, "Well, when was the last time you gave blood?" [laughter] So that was ten demerits.

Then I told my platoon, "If you guys are too chicken to give blood, then you all sign up for deductions for war bonds." Anyway, they finally booted me out.

They put me into what's called a beach battalion. They sent me down to Noroton Heights, Connecticut, where they taught us different panel markers. Our job was going to be to get into the landing craft with the Marines, go out in the first wave, and set up eight inch blinker lights and panel markings. Different color panels were to show where to land fresh blood, where to land ammunitions, where to land whatever.

How long were you with the Armed Guard?

Thirteen months.

You went in the service in June of '42 and so then about July . . .

July '43 was when I went to Trinity. February of '44 I went to Yale. November of '44 I went to Noroton Heights, Connecticut, for the beach battalion training.

Actually, they said that we were assigned to the Marine's Scouts and Raiders. They taught us how to dig fox holes in frozen ground. Then they put us in the troop train to send us out to San Francisco, to San Bruno race track. My first night there I slept on a cot in a stall that had Sea Biscuit's name out in front of it. There they issued us our fatigues and boon dockers and put us under the instruction of Marines who had been wounded overseas and who weren't fit for combat. They made them the instructors. They were very angry because they couldn't go back and fight, so they took it out on us. We had hand-to-hand fighting. Of course, I had had a lot of hand-to-hand, jujitsu, and wrestling and boxing in the V-12 and ROTC programs. But we had hand-to-hand combat. We had bayonet fighting. The Marines would keep their scabbards on their bayonets, but they'd make us unsheathe ours and tell us to try and kill them.

"I don't want to kill you, Sarge."

He said, "I'm the enemy, kill me."

We'd try and they'd whack us in the face with the rifle butt.

We'd say, "Hey, this is just practice."

They'd say, "Hey, there is no practice. We're teaching you to survive. You either kill or be killed." In hand-to-hand combat they wouldn't let us quit until somebody was bleeding or carried off.

They took us out to Sharp's Beach at five in the morning and laid us down in the incoming tide with tommy guns and Thompson submachine guns and had us firing at floating oil drums in the incoming

tide. They taught us on 20 mm Oerlikons—I mean everything. I didn’t want to be a Marine. If I did, I would have joined the Marines.

One day just a week before we were to ship out, they passed the word for volunteers for special assignment—sea duty. There was a stampede. Fortunately, I was close to the grandstand where the personnel officer was, so I was one of the early ones to get in the doorway. They took sixty-eight of us; radiomen, signalmen and three or four yeomen. They transported us over to Treasure Island and put us in a fenced in compound with barbed wire and armed guards. We couldn’t make phone calls. We couldn’t receive phone calls. We couldn’t have mail. We couldn’t write letters. It was like being a prisoner of war.

By now you must have met Frieda, because you were in San Francisco.

We arrived in San Francisco on the seventh of December, 1944, and I called her that night. The next night, I took a friend along and we double dated. We announced our engagement on Christmas Eve of ‘44. She wanted to get married right away and I said, “No, I’m not sure I’m coming back. You know this outfit I’m in, I don’t think we’re going to survive. We’ll get married if and when I get back.”

[After they took us to Treasure Island], I couldn’t call her or anything. So I guessed she figured that I had got cold feet and that I wasn’t going to show up again. I was sitting, leaning against the fence one day, reading, and I saw a neighbor of Frieda’s, Chuck Abella, who’d been on the *Abner Reed*, which was sunk up in the Aleutians. He was down there waiting for another ship. He goes walking by. I look around and there’s no guards, so I call him and he comes over.

“What the hell are you doing in there,” he said, “are you in the brig?”

“Just about,” I said, “I volunteered for an assignment. I don’t even know what it is. They got us all locked up. They don’t tell us nothing. Tell Freida that I think I’m shipping out but I don’t know where. Tell her I’m sorry that I couldn’t call her.” He passed the word to her.

We were there about a week. They gave us a complete set of shots, which I’d already had, but they said just get them again, anyway. One day they fall us in ranks and they march us down to the piers. They got an all black Navy band marching ahead of us playing two songs over and over: “Anchors Away” and “Don’t Fence Me In.” They put us on the ferry boat to take us over to Oakland, then on a troop transport, the *Okanogan*, and took us out to Honolulu. They put us in a Marine camp, Camp Catlin. We had nothing to do but suntan and read and play tennis all day. I climbed up a hillside and watched planes at Hickam Air Force Base come in. I saw a B-24 come in and crash and blow-up.

They finally gave us a liberty the night before we shipped out of Hawaii. They told us to be back by midnight and don’t tell anybody where you’re going. Well, that was easy because we didn’t know. They put us in airplanes and flew us down to Manus, down in the Admiralty Islands. We still didn’t know where we were going.

When we took off from Barbers Point, we’re in a PB2Y3 Coronado with no seats. We’re sitting on the deck and we’ve got our pea jackets rolled up for pillows. One of our engines burst into flames, so we went back in and they replaced it. Flying down to Manus we stopped at Christmas Island—we dropped off supplies at some of these islands—and got off and got something to eat. On the way down to Christmas Island one of the planes ahead of us crashed and turned over and drowned

everybody. Then a Japanese plane shot down one of the Coronados. There was an Air Force General on board that one. The pilot told us, as we're flying along, for us to keep our eyes open out the window for any other aircraft and to pass the word back to the crew chief. One of the guys all of a sudden lets out a yell that we'd been hit. We all run to that side and look out the windows and there's a big plume of smoke coming out of this engine. So, we yell for the crew chief and he comes running back, "Don't get excited. Don't get excited. It's just the engine that we repaired. It just flamed out again, but we've extinguished it."

We get down to Manus. They kept us there for almost a week. At night, when it was freezing cold, they had us unloading refrigerator ships and putting stuff on trucks, then riding the trucks over to the big reefer building and putting all the stuff in cold storage. At day time, when it was hot and humid, they had us on the mountain sides cutting Kunai grass with machetes. We could never figure why they didn't do it the other way around.

Then one day they called us all together to a Quonset hut. They put a Marine guard out front. A Navy captain comes in and says, "I know you men have all been wondering where you're going. All we knew is that we were assigned to a CincPac's Flag Alliance." We all thought it was going to be on aircraft carriers and we were all happy about that, but it was speculation. "I'm at liberty now to tell you where you're going. Tomorrow, units of the British Pacific Fleet will be arriving and you men are going to be assigned aboard them as communication liaison team members. The signalmen will train them in our communication procedures—our flags and things like that. Radiomen will teach them how to type, because they don't know how to type. Then you're to teach them how

to stand the fox watches, which are so fast that you need to type them. There will be an officer aboard each ship that will teach tactics. The idea is, you're going to perform as an all British task force, TF 57, as part of the Fifth Fleet, using American procedures, communications, and tactics so that when we do the invasion of the Japanese mainland you, the British, can merge with the Third and Fifth Fleet and be able to perform with them safely. That's what your job is. We are going to put one case of cigarettes aboard for each of you. There will be special food put aboard for you. There will be athletic equipment put aboard. Each day you serve will count double for the rotation. The British government is going to strike a special medal for your service. Any questions?"

My hand goes up.

The captain says, "Yes sailor?"

"My question is, 'How do you get out of this, Captain? I've been on British ships and they're garbage barges.'"

"Your answer is simple, you don't."

So they assigned us. I wound up on an Australian destroyer, *HMAS Quickmatch*. We had five carriers but kept one of them on reserve. We had one that was fairly damaged and that had engine problems, so they took it back down the line and brought the other one up. We had two battle ships: *King George the Fifth* and *HMS Howell*. We had eight or ten cruisers, including a Canadian cruiser, the *Uganda* and a New Zealand cruiser, the *Gambia*. We had sixteen to twenty destroyers that were variously British and Australian.

We operated between Okinawa and Formosa. Our main activities were against the Sakishima-Guntō chain. They had three airfields, Miyako, Iriomote, and Ishigaki. Our job was to keep them cratered so that they couldn't stage aircraft through from Formosa to Okinawa to help the defense there. We had

no night fighter capability, so we bombed the runways during the day time. Slave labor would fill the craters at night, and we would have to do it all over again the next day. We were constantly subjected to kamikaze attacks.

The British ships were not built for that kind of warfare. They really didn't have any anti-aircraft capability. On the Quickmatch, we had a quadruple Bofers, which is a 40 mm pom-pom gun, in front. My duty station was after steering, a twelve-foot platform back aft, behind the stacks. We always got the sulfur and the cinders in our face when we were steaming for evasive action. We had four 20 mm Oerlikons—two on either side of us—on our platform. Behind us were two deck guns, 4.7 deck guns, but they had limited elevation capabilities so they were no good for anti-aircraft, even though they used them as such. So the fleet took a lacing. We would have lost every carrier, but the British carriers had four-inch steel flight decks and six-inch steel splinter decks. Whereas, our American carriers had wooden flight decks and steel splinter decks, and the bombs went right through them. I saw kamikazes hit those British carriers day after day and explode and slide off the end. The only thing it damaged, was that it wiped out all the arresting gear and blackened the superstructure. The British gunners were fantastic—in the middle of all those flames and everything they still continued to fire.

You stood up there in that little station you had?

No! I wasn't sitting in that little station. They had the Australian signalman sitting up on the bridge with the Captain. My job was telephone talker. The executive officer was back there with me. I was his duty station and during GQ [general quarters], my job was to watch for incoming aircraft. When the

20 mm gunners were following an aircraft, when the aircraft would get out of their zone of fire, they'd be so intent on that thing they'd keep after him. I had a half-inch dowelling that was about five feet long. My job was to tap them on the shoulder and point out the next incoming plane. Well, they were strapped in and shaking, and with the noise and everything they couldn't feel my tap, so I'm beating the hell out of them. When we'd finally get an "all clear", they'd unstrap and they'd be complaining about all the welts on their shoulders. They thought it was from the straps, but it was from me beating them with that damn doweling.

One day we had twelve "Flash Reds," which was their GQ. They were all false alarms or just "Washing Machine Charlie" coming out to take pictures. The cover combat air patrol would shoot down the planes coming in. It got to be kind of boring. Well, I was raised a devout coward, so every time we had a "Flash Red" I grabbed all my survival gear and I was up on station. I'd report in, "Manned and ready!"

On the thirteenth "Flash Red" that day we're all there except the XO and they keep calling from the bridge, "Report manned and ready."

Finally, I see the XO; here he comes sauntering down the deck, carrying his cup of tea. He's coming up the ladder and I'm reporting, "Manned and ready!" He's got shorts on and shower shoes. He's got a soft hat—no helmet, no life jacket, no anti-flash gear.

He comes up and he says, "I suppose it's another bloody false alarm." About that time they came in from four directions. We were plane guard for the *HMS Victorious*. The carriers were toward the center of the fleet. All the ships out on the outer ring start firing at the planes coming in. Well, naturally they were firing over us and shrapnel was

bouncing off the deck. Every time a plane came in, the XO is backing up and backing up and he backs me into a corner against the lifelines. Then a big piece a shrapnel bounced off the deck. The seaman messenger picked it up as a souvenir and immediately had a big blister on the palm of his hand.

I told the XO, "Mr. Merson, take my gear. I'll go down below and get some others."

He said, "No, you better keep that on."

I said, "Hey, you're going to get killed. I said take it."

He said, "No, no. You need it."

Well, I wanted to get the hell off of there, so I took my helmet off. I had taken my own American style helmet and one of these CO₂ life belts aboard with me. They were still wearing the old WWI Tommy flat helmets and the cork and canvas life jackets aboard. I forced my anti-flash gear on him, and I ran over to the ladder to go down. My head felt this big around. I went to the ladder to go down and a seaman was coming up with a couple of snails of 20 mm ammunition.

So I yell, "Gang way! No helmet!"

He says, "Gang way, ammunition!"

Well, ammunition came first, so I jumped over his head down onto the deck and landed flat-footed. I injured my back, and I think that's why I had back surgery twelve years ago. I crawled under the wing where the 20 mm were. I'm sitting, thinking what do I do now? Up on the bulkhead there were racks with some helmets and life jackets. I really don't want to go back up there, but if I don't they're going to say, "The Yank's a coward." So I took a helmet and went back topside.

When it was all over the XO said, "It was a very heroic thing you did."

I said, "I just wanted an excuse to get under cover."

"No, you came back up. I know your Navy is gung-ho on medals and awards," he said,

"and I'd like to see you get something for your actions. What would be appropriate?"

I said, "Jeez, that probably happens every day on our ships, I probably wouldn't get anything more than a Congressional Medal of Honor or maybe a Navy Cross." [laughter]

He said, "Well, that's interesting."

That night, our officer sent a messenger for me to come back to his compartment, "What the hell did you do up there anyway?" Well, the ship's captain was always reporting me for something. I was a thorn in his side. I grew a mustache because they can't. I interceded one time with a guy who jumped over the side and saved a pilot, who was drifting away from us in his little raft. I was trying to get up the courage to do it myself and this seaman jumped off the main deck. The captain wanted the seaman to be put in irons for leaving the ship without permission. I told him that was chicken shit, that in my Navy, the guy would have got a medal before he got a towel. So the captain was not too happy with me.

But anyway, I said, "I didn't do anything."

He said, "No, I'm not talking about the captain. The XO was down and he wanted me to get you a Congressional Medal of Honor."

I said, "Well, I was just his pulling his leg."

He said, "Well, that's what I told him, but he was very serious. He wanted me to get something appropriate."

So I said, "Well, either a Bronze Star or a Silver Star."

"Fine."

He said to the XO, "Would you recommend it to your superiors down at Sydney, Australia?"

The XO said, "Well, I can't do it. You'll have to do it through your commanding officers. If my CO knew I was up there without my survival gear, I'd be in irons as soon as we got out of the combat zone. Just tell Kincade I do appreciate it."

So, you know, I got robbed out of my Congressional Medal of Honor. [laughter] But I lost thirty pounds in three months in that assignment.

I am going to Portsmouth, England, next month for the 50th anniversary commemoration of the British Pacific Fleet and the East Indies Fleet. I'm going to be the only American there, apparently. I'm taking an American flag to carry in the march past. They're going to line us up and walk us down the main street of Portsmouth. I'm going to fly the Stars and Stripes there. It should be interesting, hopefully.

You finished the war with them?

Just about. After the Okinawa campaign, the British fleet went down to Australia for repairs, and they detached us down there. They put us on a British aircraft tender, and sent us back up to the Admiralty Islands for reassignment. Put us on an LCIL and took us from there to Hollandia, New Guinea, where they made us load stores aboard the ship. Then we went to the Philippines. They put us on the *Annie Arundel*, a troop transport there that was a reassignment ship. I was reassigned to a non-self-propelled barracks barge, the APL41. We called it the *Waldorf Astoria*. It had five hundred black ammunition workers and stevedores on board and no radio. Visual communication was the only communication we had.

I was on board her, in Leyte Harbor, when the war ended. I was sitting in our compartment playing hearts with some guys. The hatch was open and I looked out and I saw two red flares go up from a cruiser, which was a signal for an air raid so I yelled, "Air raid!" We all started to run topside and then I see bright red flares and I see green flares and I see tracers. I went up to my little flag bridge

and signalled to a nearby ship and asked them what's happening.

The guy said, "The war's over! The Japanese surrendered!"

The captain comes up. He was a lieutenant in the Navy nine months and overseas five, and he said, "Boy, I'm so happy. Call the chief storekeeper and tell him to break out two beers for everybody."

I called the chief and he opened the stores and gave out two beers to everybody. But the captain didn't mean that for the black stevedores, because he was from the south and he hated blacks. But they all got two beers as well as the fifty ship's company. The storekeeper billed the CO for it and he went berserk because it was not what he had in mind. Then we found out it was a false alarm. It wasn't until a couple of days later that they had the real surrender. By that time everybody had used up all their ammunition, so we didn't have any to fire.

Did you hear about the bomb?

Not at that time. We didn't hear about the bomb until probably a week later.

You made a career out of the Navy, and become an officer, eventually.

I got out as a signalman first class. I got out for four and a half years, but I stayed in the submarine reserve. I changed my rating over to personnel man, made chief, and volunteered for active duty for the Korean War. I took tests to go back into the regular Navy again, and passed. In five years, in 1957, I took the competitive examinations for a limited duty officer classification, administration. I got selected, got promoted to ensign, and was assigned to an amphibious squadron staff; did three years on an eighteen

month assignment. From there I went to the Amphibious Forces Pacific headquarter's as the Assistant Force Personnel Officer. I did two years there and then went to Hawaii as Assistant Fleet Personnel Officer for Policy and Distribution and then over to the fleet commander's staff. I did a total of three years in Hawaii. I went back to San Diego for three years with the Enlisted Personnel Distribution Office of the Pacific, and retired from there September 1, 1968, with twenty seven-years service. Come one September this year, I'll have been out exactly as long as I was in.

Since then I've gotten interested in law enforcement as assistant to the chief of police in Chula Vista, California. I got into hypnosis and became a forensic hypnotist. I'm in my ninth term as the president of the International Society for Investigative and Forensic Hypnosis. I have been recognized internationally for my work. I've lectured in Japan. I've worked cases for the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Marshal's, the FBI, and many different law enforcement agencies. I put on seminars for police agencies to teach them self-hypnosis for stress management, firearms proficiency, athletic performance, promotional exams—you name it. I never charge a penny for my services for law enforcement or to any police officer. I have received a Congressional Distinguished Service Award for my work with law enforcement. I have been twice nominated to the International Hypnosis Hall of Fame.

WARREN G. KNIERIEM, JR.

Ken Adams: The first question is who are you, when were you born and where?

Warren G. Knieriem: I'm Warren Knieriem. I was born March 24, 1927, in Reading, Pennsylvania, in the Reading Hospital. My parents had been married June the previous year. Shortly after my birth—I think I was six weeks old—my parents took me to Philadelphia where my father was working for Metropolitan Life Insurance, and they settled down in Philadelphia. My father had been educated as an engineer.

Did your father have a college degree?

He didn't have a degree. He had three years at Bucknell University. He left school to get married in 1926. At some point he moved to the Budd manufacturing company, which I believe was a manufacturer of railroad cars. After some time there, he was taken on at the Naval Aircraft Factory in Philadelphia. This was back in the early days of aviation when a draftsman such as he was could—as he said

many times—open a little handbook and design an airplane.

Eventually, though, the Depression hit and early in the thirties he was laid off at the Naval Aircraft Factory. My sister, who's two years younger than I am, had come along. We moved to the outskirts of Baltimore, where my father had a job for six weeks at the aircraft company there. He got laid off again because of the Depression and moved on to southern California where there was a promise of a job.

Do you remember the trip across at all?

I remember my nose bled all the way through Arizona. This was probably September of 1933, just after the Long Beach earthquake happened in southern California.

That was a pretty big adventure for a seven year old. Did you drive or go by train?

We came by train, the old Santa Fe Scout. I had to scrunch down in the seat all the way out to try to look like I was younger than five.

That was the break on the free child's ticket. It was necessary that I scrunch, because when we got to Los Angeles I think my father had seven dollars and fifty cents left in his pocket and a wife and two kids.

We got a room in a rooming house at Twenty-first and Grand in Los Angeles. It's almost downtown—twenty-first being twenty-one blocks south of the City Hall and Grand about four or five blocks west of Broadway. I do know that my father walked from there to Santa Monica to the Douglas plant to work. Eventually he went to work for Northrop Air Craft, which was at that time The Northrop Company and a subsidiary of the Douglas Corporation. The reason he went to southern California and got a job with Douglas is that one of the Douglas family was a schoolmate of my mother and father in Pennsylvania. Father worked for Northrop Company until 1938 or 1939, I guess.

What were your parents names?

My mother's maiden name was Lucy Kassander, and my father was Warren G. Knieriem without the junior on it. They didn't want to name me the same name, but they put the Warren without a middle name on my birth certificate. So I don't have a middle name and became a junior legally.

I lived the life of a boy. I had a typical growing up period. I went to elementary school at St. John Christian school and catholic school in Inglewood. When I got out of elementary school, I went to Loyola High School in Los Angeles and later on, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles for a couple years.

In late 1938 or '39, my father went across the street to North American Aviation. He worked there for a year and then went back to work with Jack Northrop at the newly

formed Northrop Corporation. My father was one of a nucleus of eleven who went to work with Jack. He was involved in many projects, which because of their secrecy, I was never privy to . . . I'm still not. (On the Discovery Channel I'm finding out more about some of the things he was involved in.) I was aware that he was a project engineer on Northrop's big project, the propeller version of the flying wing and also the jet version. My father left Northrop and went on to other things when Jack Northrop himself was squeezed out of his own company. He passed away in 1970. We spent so much time with him because he was such an influence in my life.

He managed to be a pretty successful aeronautic engineer all the way through the Depression, I take it, because he was stable after moving to California?

Once he got with the Naval Aircraft Factory and stayed in the aircraft industry, he was quite successful. He was one of those unique individuals who was not only an engineer, but had business sense, and had a way of dealing with people. He could be as tough as nails or, you know, as sweet as honey, to get the job done. He was very well respected by the many who worked for him or with whom he associated. Some of that rubbed off on me and allowed me to progress in my career although I didn't have a college degree either.

I can remember my father many nights getting home late, having a late dinner, and then having to take care of paperwork he had brought home from work. I suspect quite a bit of it was a form of continuing education to keep himself improving all the time. I can remember the way he treated me. I remember one incident during World War II when I was in high school. I had made a

deal with some of my friends. One had a gas coupon, another had some little money, and so on. All we needed was a car to drive. We had the gas and everything we needed to go out one evening—probably to chase girls. I approached my father to borrow the car. I had prepared my speech all day long and I gave him my speech. He put down the newspaper and he looked up and he says, “Now tell me, why do you need the car?” I didn’t get the car that night, but the way he dealt with people who worked for him and those experiences, in my case, rubbed off on me and allowed me to move up through the business world and public service later on in life.

You were fourteen years old?

I was, I believe, fourteen when the war broke out.

Do you remember . . . ?

I remember exactly where I was that Sunday. There was a Christmas dinner at the church. I was into high school by that time, and a group of the high school boys were called upon to set up the chairs and tables. The women decorated. The men were in the kitchen cooking turkeys and what not. At some point, I’m going to say around noon southern California time, someone said the Japs had just bombed Pearl Harbor. There was a fair amount of consternation. It did spoil the celebration of the event, but things went on.

From that time on, I can remember the need for blackout curtains. My family lived in a house that was in north Inglewood or just across the line into Los Angeles. It sat up on a small hill and we overlooked what is the L.A. International Airport. The airport was much smaller in those days. We could see traffic in and out of the airport. We could

see the airplanes that were being moved out for delivery; to either our armed forces that were building up in the early days of the war or perhaps to Britain or one of our other allies. [There was] the occasional air raid drill with rumors of heavy aircraft overhead, particularly around the airport and the aircraft plants. In that area, there was camouflaged netting strapped over the roof. There were anti-aircraft batteries on the roofs of many buildings throughout southern California. All the Japanese were early on moved from their small businesses; the neighborhood groceries and particularly the farms down on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Can you remember any of that directly?

In Inglewood there was a little corner store, about the equivalent of our Seven-Eleven today, that was owned and operated by a Japanese family. I remember them picking up the Japanese and moving them.

How did you feel about it when it happened? Did you feel it was the right thing to do? Did you feel that they were enemy agents?

There were a lot of rumors at that time that some of the farmers down on the Palos Verdes Peninsula had plowed arrows into their ground. I never saw any evidence of that. I never saw any photographs in the newspapers to prove that. At my age, I probably didn’t give it too much thought and probably didn’t make any decision. Now, looking back at the feelings of other people, I feel it was best that it happened. I think that, had the Japanese not been interned, there would have been a racial situation that would not have helped the Japanese. Whether that was the purpose or not, I think it was the best thing to protect the Japanese. I didn’t have any close friends, but I

knew quite a number of Japanese boys about my age. I know that a number of them enlisted in one branch of the service or another, and escaped the intern camp that way. For the most part, I guess they all served admirably.

Did you follow the news about the war? Did you pay attention to the war?

We didn't have television. Even twenty-five or thirty-five cents to go to a movie picture on a Friday night was a little bit hard to come by sometimes. Our entertainment was largely radio. In high school, beyond Captain Midnight and Jack Armstrong—the kid serials that were on in the afternoon—I did enjoy quite a number of evening radio programs. I can remember a mystery series, "Twenty-Six by Corwin" and then the summer replacement was "Thirteen by Corwin," and Jack Benny and the other comedians of the time. Listening to radio as an entertainment medium, I heard a lot of news, particularly on Saturday or Sunday evening. So in that respect, yes, I kept up with the war.

In school did you pay attention? Did they have maps and did you pay attention to the battles fought? Was there a real awareness of the details of the war?

I can't remember in school that there was that much intensity about current history. I think that most of our concern and our knowledge of the war came from radio news broadcasts, from the newspapers, and from personal messages from families of those who were a few years older than I was who were in the service. So and so was a P-38 pilot and he'd been shot down in the raid over Germany. Or so and so's cousin was on a destroyer that was torpedoed in the Pacific.

Did it make you in a hurry to grow up so you could be a part of it?

At fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen I think there was probably some interest in getting there so I could get involved. But when I got to, say, late sixteen and seventeen, then there were other concerns in my mind and my schoolmates minds. Two things were going to happen. Either we're going to go over there somewhere and we're going to get shot to hell. Or things are going to settle down and we're going to win, but we're going to be over there for twenty years as an army of occupation. So we weren't looking forward to service life during the, let's say, junior and senior years in high school. And at that time, too, we were closer and closer to individuals who were either seriously wounded or killed in service, because those would have been juniors and seniors when we were freshmen and sophomores.

There was some apprehension about service life. Looking forward to when we would be eighteen and would have to go somewhere. Whether I did it consciously or not, I don't know, but I was listening to the stories of the long square needle in the left ball, the rigors of basic training, and the glories and suffering of the marines on a little island somewhere. Some of these things directed me toward the Coast Guard.

I was involved in the sea scouts. The sea scout's ship that I belonged to was working with the lifeguards and with the Coast Guard and with the Army off the Santa Monica Bay coast. We towed practice targets off shore for the Army. We patrolled the beaches of Santa Monica Bay when there was a storm. I was always aware that the Coast Guard was not just a man standing on the beach or walking on the beach here in this country. I knew that the Coast Guard was world wide.

How old were you when you joined the Coast Guard?

I enlisted some time during my seventeenth year.

You were still in high school?

No, I was out of high school going to Loyola University on an accelerated program. They had four semesters a year or something like that because of the war. I had two semesters in when I enlisted and was told to sit and wait for a while. Go get your tonsils out and we'll call you when we're ready for you. I'm just taking a wild guess but that would have been November-December of 1944. I was not called to duty until early April 1945.

What did you do during the waiting time?

I set pins in some bowling alley, painted a couple of rooms for my mother, kept myself busy.

Did you have any anxiety waiting and not knowing what was going to happen?

As I recall, there was some good and bad. For the most part, the United States was winning. We were coming out ahead, but there were still reports of fantastic body counts and fantastic casualty rates in the Pacific and in some of the actions in Europe, also. Roosevelt died a matter of days after I went on active duty and reported to the Coast Guard. A short time after that was VE Day, which kind of settled the European situation, except for occupation.

Was there a big celebration over the VE Day?

Yes, there was quite a celebration. I can't recall on VE Day whether I was confined to

the base that night or whether I was in San Diego at radar school or just what . . . I just can't remember VE Day. I remember that I had gone through radar school in San Diego and was back at Alameda awaiting a ship assignment when VJ Day occurred. I had just gotten out the gate for the night's liberty and went across the bridge. A group of us were cutting diagonally through the lumber yard that used to be there, to catch the old red A-train into Oakland and Berkeley, or on to San Francisco. And all of a sudden, you could hear the bells and the whistles and the loudspeakers. The base was closed, nobody could get out, so we hid under the lumber piles for a couple of hours until things quieted down, then went into Berkeley. I don't remember any wild celebration. There were a lot of people milling around but not riot conditions by any means. I do remember that early the next morning, I and a couple of my friends were serving ham and eggs and hash browns and whatnot in a little diner somewhere in Berkeley. The owner had gotten drunk and he was on the floor. We were running the place for him; probably didn't collect any money for any food we served. And of course, looking at our watches as we had to be back in at six o'clock in the morning. But that was VJ Day. A few days later we had our ship assignment and went overseas.

Where were you when the bombs dropped on Hiroshima? Do you remember when you first heard about it?

I can't remember. I was either just finishing radar school in San Diego or I had gotten back to Alameda and was awaiting a ship assignment. I just can't recall that.

You don't remember how you reacted to it or how you felt about it?

No. My guess would be that if we were told of the massive destruction and massive loss of life, we probably had some concern for the Japanese people as we realized the Japanese people were not at fault. It was their leaders who had begun the war and continued the war. I realized at the same time that, although it may have been another extreme measure for our country to take, the way some of the Japanese had dug into some of the islands in the Pacific proved their fanaticism, and that it was probably the only recourse to end the war without another 50,000-100,000 American boys being killed.

What month and year did you graduate from high school?

I graduated from high school in June, 1944.

That fall you started Loyola?

That was an accelerated program. I graduated on the fourth of June, which was a Sunday if I recall correctly, and eight days after I graduated from high school, I started at Loyola University.

What was your major?

Just a liberal arts major.

Did you know then what you wanted to be?

I had dreams of being an editor of a country newspaper somewhere—never happened. But I'd always enjoyed English and literature. I had somewhat of a propensity for writing. Through most of my working career, I was labeled as the one to generate necessary written reports. Even in my career as a fireman I was able to write a reasonable

report that told concisely what had happened. If there was an investigation of the fire, I could follow that through with a written report. Now, with my retired status, I spend most of my time writing newsletters for non-profit organizations.

The war didn't influence the choices you made academically?

No.

You registered for the draft?

I don't believe I had registered for the draft after I got out of high school because I'd guess the draft registration had to occur when I was eighteen. I enlisted when I was still seventeen, so I didn't have to be involved with the draft.

And the sea scouts were just kind of a preliminary to . . . ?

Well, the sea scouts were, I can't say a step up, but a parallel to the boy scout organization. About the fifth grade a gentleman came to school and talked [about the] boy scouts. Half of the boys in my class said, "Let's go to the meeting and join the boy scouts."

The meeting was held in Inglewood at the old veteran's building. There were two big cannons from World War I mounted in the grass on top of the hill. They're buried in I don't know how many tons of concrete. We were playing and someone says: "Let's roll these cannons down the hill and get the enemy," as fifth grade boys would do when playing a little war game. We were invited to leave and not come back because we were so rowdy. We never understood what was so rowdy about just playing a game and yelling a little bit.

Later on—it seems to me you had to be thirteen or so—I somehow got involved in the

sea scouts and enjoyed that very much. It was much like scouting except, instead of a tent, you had a small boat of some sort and you would perform your duties on water.

You went to Loyola for . . .

I had two semesters at Loyola. With four semesters a year, I would assume they were approximately three months long each. I had two semesters there, which would have taken me to November or December, at which point I enlisted and then was told to wait a couple of months.

You had to get your tonsils out and wait?

Yes. I did not go back to Loyola in January when the next semester would have started. I went in the service in April. After I was discharged in May of '46, I went back to Loyola and had two more semesters. That was boring so I went to work.

What was your initial training like when you first enlisted?

Most of the action that the west coast training centers would send us to was in the Pacific. We saw a lot of films on malaria, and, of course, the usual venereal disease education films. We did the same marching as the Army or anybody else; designed, I realize now, to discipline or to discipline those who had never had any discipline. [We gained] familiarity with a number of different types of weapons. It was about a six week program.

Did you get out time at all?

Oh, yes, some out time. Small boat handling was limited in basic training, but there was some of that, yes.

Was there still a sense of urgency in training? Or was the attitude more relaxed?

No. It was also an accelerated program. Basic training in all branches of the service had been as long as twelve weeks. In the Coast Guard, it had been reduced to eight weeks sometime before I went on active duty. I believe that my basic training group was the first one to adjust to a six week training. We kind of spread out after basic training. Several of us went to radar school in San Diego. Others went to other specialty schools. We had six or eight weeks in San Diego and then back to Alameda for a ship assignment.

What was the job title you had when you finished with your radar tasks?

I was still a radar striker. I only had two stripes on my . . .

A striker is an apprentice?

Right.

So they just give you the basics and left you to learn the rest of it on ship?

I got the training in school, but I still didn't know anything except for mechanics. I would need to sit with a more qualified radar operator and learn the fine points under his supervision. At some point, I would actually get one striped chevron on my upper arm to indicate that I was a radar operator. The ship I was assigned to had a very small radar installation. I never participated in the radar operations aboard the ship. I got my seaman first class rating and that was as far as it went before I was mustered out.

You were in San Francisco waiting for a ship assignment when the Japanese surrendered?

Right.

So you knew that you would be going into a peace time military.

Right.

Was there a real sense of "Pshaw!" It's all over," or was it, "Boy, I wish I had gotten there a little sooner"?

I don't recall that there was that much relief. There was still anticipation of, "Am I going to see the world?" I didn't realize at the time that the world we were going to see was largely low, pin dots on a map of the Pacific. There was really nothing to see. I guess the biggest installation we saw was Guam. At some point we were directed to change course and go to Eniwetok, where we picked up a section of dry dock and towed that through the Panama Canal to Norfolk, Virginia.

That was shortly before the Eniwetok atomic test activity. I guess the Eniwetok test activity was somewhat publicized because when we found out we were going to Eniwetok we were relishing a certain amount of excitement. Making a hundred miles a day towing that section of dry dock got very boring in the hundred and some days from Eniwetok to Panama through the canal and up the east coast. If I recall correctly, just before we made the trip from Panama to Norfolk, there was the tremendous hurricane that tore the flight deck off of one of the navy carriers . . . sent it off to Florida or the South Carolina coast. It was interesting.

What was the name of the ship?

USS Eridanus.

You said it was a liberty ship?

Right.

It had a crew of . . . ?

About 120-125.

You said you didn't get to work on the radar—what specifically was your job?

Oh, I had a variety of jobs. I was the mailman when we were in port, and just a general member of the deck crew at sea. As mailman, I had the keys to the ship's library, which was a little caged off area with paperbacks and maybe a few hard cover books. A general jack of all trades, I remember one day my assignment was to burn classified documents in a wire mesh basket on the fan tail. I had to feed it one sheet of paper at a time.

What kind of classified documents would be on a ship?

I wasn't suppose to look at them, but I rather imagine there were, oh, perhaps the radio or radar or other equipment operation manuals that been updated; so the old pages had to be destroyed. I have no idea. I was told, "Don't read them, just burn them." So I didn't read them. They were all confidential or top secret and had some classification stamped on them.

When you were assigned to the ship, you immediately went to the Pacific and started to bring supplies and move things from one place to the next?

First thing, we went aboard the ship. The ship had no cargo on it at that time. We went on board sometime during the day. There was a loading operation going on. That night we left San Francisco. [There wasn't] a great

deal of cargo. It was all just set out on the deck. They were gray, navy colored canisters of some sort. We were to take an ax or some sort of sharp instrument, puncture each one, and throw them overboard. We spent most of the night with several pallets of these canisters. We were off towards the Farallon's. Years since, I have always wondered about this since there have been reports of various toxic or other materials dumped in the ocean near the Farallon's that killed fish or destroyed the ecology or whatever. I have no idea what the material was. We were working in the dark and couldn't read the black lettering on the gray canisters. We punctured them and threw them overboard. We went back into San Francisco early the next morning.

Within a matter of a day or two, we were loaded with cargo. Cargo on the whole was largely food supplies and such as that. We had deck cargoes and large construction equipment . . . steam shovels and trucks and whatnot. On our trip we probably picked up more cargo than we dropped off. In the eastern Pacific, while the bases there were not necessarily being closed down, they were being cut down in size and scaled down in activities. We'd drop off a large food supply for someone at an island and go to another island and do the same thing. Periodically, we would pick up items that were not food, toilet tissue and such as that, and take that on to another island. We were still mobilized at full strength.

What were some of the islands you visited?

Midway, Guam, Saipan, Palau . . .

Did you get an opportunity to get off of the ship in any of those places?

The majority of the crew, no. But as mailman, yes, I had a chance to go ashore and

go to a tent or something that was a post office and pick up a couple of sacks of mail for the ship and, of course, take mail coming from home ashore, but not for a great deal of sight seeing. Probably the most sight seeing we had was at Guam. Guam was a big installation and there were several beer halls there that the service operated. Everybody got their two cans of green beer ration everyday. In Guam you could get ashore, sit in the shade, have your two cans of beer and a couple of hours ashore, and then come back to the ship.

Not much to see in Guam?

No, not at that time.

Were there remnants of the war you could see? Were you interested in that or were you just interested in getting your cans of beer?

Well, the information that we had about Guam was that the beer halls were the only place to go. The only other thing on Guam was the airfield. At that time they were expanding the runway on Guam. There was a lot of bull dozer activity—at any rate we could hear a lot of the equipment. There were trucks and jeeps and God only knows what else. It was surplus that would cost to send back home. They were just scraping it at the end of runway and covering it with dirt to extend the runway and the airport.

It was soon enough after the Japanese had surrendered that on most of the islands there were still some of the die hard fanatics living in caves and in the back country; especially on big islands like Guam. I remember passing Babelthaup. We were several miles off of the island, but as we passed there was still quite a bit of fighting going on. On Babelthaup there were twenty thousand Japanese holed up in caves. They're trying to talk them out, but in

most cases they were fighting to stay there, and our forces had to fight to get them out. There was still a lot of activity on many of the islands out there.

None of it that you ever saw?

No. While I was on that ship, it was never under fire.

You were the mailman, which means that probably you were a reasonably important person when you had the mail.

There was only one person who didn't appreciate my return to the ship. There was a lieutenant commander . . . I would guess his age at about seventy. He had been a merchant marine officer for years and had been taken into the Coast Guard because of his experience and the buildup of the Coast Guard fleet during the war. His home was in San Francisco and he had a very young wife. He was anxious for word from her that she was still faithful. He wasn't always getting mail and when he did, it was somewhat disconcerting to him. When I came back to the ship, either on a landing craft or walking down a pier, he would be up on one wing of the bridge saying, "Where's that goddamn mailman? He better have some mail for me today or I'm going to kick his ass!" And so I hoped I had mail for him. [laughter] I had to sort through the mail the very first thing, and then sort out the officers' mail and take that to one of the stewards who would distribute it. I never had to face him when I didn't have mail for him.

Did you write a lot of letters yourself?

I can't say I wrote every day. We had a pretty good idea on how long we were going

to be between one port and another. When we first left San Francisco, we went from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor. We picked up tons and tons and tons of canned pineapple in Pearl Harbor. Knowing that we had seven to ten days from San Francisco to Pearl there was no point in writing. You'd write a long letter just before you got into Pearl so it could be mailed. While we were in Hawaii, there were postcards and you could write letters. The crew were probably writing everyday at that point. Leaving Pearl Harbor for wherever the next destination was, we would know that we would be at sea for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one days. No point in writing, it was just going to be a stale letter by the time we got anywhere.

Who did you write to?

My mother, and a girlfriend at the time. I'd write a special letter to my sister. Well, immediate family was probably the extent of it. I perhaps wrote brief notes to some of the families that we had been close to in Inglewood.

Your time in the Pacific was about a year?

From early September to May. The last portion of that, we were going from Eniwetok to Norfolk.

That was a hundred days in itself.

Right. We got to Norfolk and dropped off the section of dry-dock, then we took the ship to Baltimore. We were there maybe a week packing things, getting the ship ready for decommissioning. We packed up books and everything; all loose material aboard the ship. There were crews on deck with torches taking off the gun placements and so on. When we

had the ship ready for decommissioning, then the entire crew left the ship and split into groups heading to different parts of the United States—to the west coast, to the south, or wherever. Maybe ten or twelve of us came to the west coast or to the Los Angeles area. Well, they put us on the train; we ended up in Los Angeles, then Terminal Island, the Naval facility in Long Beach, and started the discharge process. We were all close to home, so we all had every night off. They didn't have to feed us dinner or give us a place to sleep overnight.

You said that somewhere in this period of time the Coast Guard was moved from being in the Navy to the Secretary of Treasury.

The Coast Guard had been a part of the Treasury Department before the war. Sometime early in the war the Coast Guard was transferred to the Navy. After hostilities ended, sometime between September of '45 and May of '46—I can't remember the timing—it was moved back to the Treasury Department, it's old home. The Treasury Department was interested in smuggling and so on but didn't have the budget to maintain a large force or for the types of things that the Coast Guard had been doing. So it was necessary for the Coast Guards to be scaled back, [resulting] in the wholesale disposition of personnel.

Had I been in the United States, I might have been discharged some months earlier. Since we were at sea and didn't arrive at a port in the continental United States until May of 1946, there was no opportunity to discharge us. At sometime the point system was developed, where you get a point for every month in service, points for rank, and you could get points for family hardship and so on. A certain number of points was the

criteria for individuals in all the services to be discharged. I've got a vague recollection that a few of our crew had been in the service long enough and had enough points for discharge. They might have left us in Guam or someplace and sent home on discharge. But the majority of us were not even regular Coast Guard, or those of us who were in the Coast Guard reserve were young enough that we didn't have enough time in the service to have earned enough points for discharge. Until the Coast Guard was back into the Treasury Department, the probability was that some of us might have had two or three years of service to complete . . . either to finish out an enlistment or to earn enough points to be discharged.

How long were you back before your discharge?

Three days.

So it was a pretty quick process.

It was a quick process. It could have been delayed at one point. Somewhere in the discharge process you get a full physical. A dentist looked at my mouth and said, "You have a couple of cavities," and wrote that on a card.

I went to the next desk or somewhere down the line and was told that I had two choices. I could stay in for a little while and get the teeth fixed at government's expense. But he said, "Well, unfortunately, we're pretty well booked up. It's going to be about three weeks. Your other choice is, you can go home and take care of it yourself."

So I opted to go home and take care of it myself. They were very small cavities and dentists weren't nearly as expensive then, so it was no problem. I went home in May. My job prospects were not the best. I went to the

employment office as I was directed. They classified me as “clerical and other”, whatever that meant.

You didn't have any real job experience?

I had no job experience. They told me, “Well, come back next Monday and we'll check.” I was suppose to report every Monday. That was with the old 52-20 plan: twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks. You were guaranteed that as part of your separation.

My folks had a summer cabin at Big Bear Lake. I went there and fished and enjoyed life. My father was working long, hard hours, but he'd end up there every Friday afternoon and I'd ride down with him Monday morning. I'd go to the employment office and get my twenty dollar check and get a bus back up to Big Bear. I enjoyed life for a while. But it got old with nothing to do and only twenty dollars to spend per week.

Within a month or so I didn't rush back up on Mondays. I'd stay down in Inglewood, in Los Angeles, for at least a couple of days and see what I could find. I eventually found a job, “clerical and other,” at Occidental Life Insurance. It was a temporary job, but I performed well enough that when the temporary assignment was completed The job was trying to rebuild the company's China accounts; a lot of insurance premium payments had been put in coffee cans or in oil skin and buried. Some of them were found after the war; some of them weren't found after the war; it was sketchy records. A small group of us were rebuilding the policy records of several tens of thousands of Chinese in Shanghai.

By premiums do you mean the premiums that the company had been depositing . . . ?

No, the agent in Shanghai who originally sold the policy. He would collect the money, or our office in Shanghai would collect the money. The situation [during the war] in China was that they couldn't use the banks. There was no way to transfer the money, so they would hide it or bury it or something. Some of the money and some of the records were found after the war. There were gaps, but we were taking what information we had. Then we could say that on such and such dates, these policy holders paid this agent so much money and we could apply it to the individual policy owner's account. We would have gaps where there was no record of anything having been paid, but the fact that the agent or broker or the office had dated the receipts in such a way, we could assume that payments had been made in between. The company was just writing that off. It was a tremendous task—not necessarily to assure that the premiums had been paid by the policy holder—that was immaterial. The big problem was trying to justify or reconcile the commission accounts of the sales people. When we had enough information to assume that everything was in order, the company settled with their China agents from before and during the war.

Weren't all those letters in Chinese?

No. The company was an American company, so what information we had was in English on company forms or something close to a company form.

And in some way or other, the records were forwarded to this office?

Yes. After the war, the records that could be found were all forwarded to the home

office. We tried to reconcile the accounts—and did it satisfactorily.

How long did it take for you to do that?

I think that took about six months. I performed well enough that I was kept on, and ended up as an internal auditor and assistant supervisor of a small group from mid-1946 until early 1952.

Did you give any thought to the GI Bill after you got out?

I did go back to school for another two semesters and part of September of '46. It was later than that when I finally went to work, I guess. By that time, myself and a few others in school were three or four years older than the kids coming in. We were in the minority and kind of a different split from everyone else. We felt we didn't fit and we felt we should be out making our fortunes.

Was it tough competing with the veterans of the war who had more service time for jobs? Or was it tougher competing against civilians who hadn't been gone at all and kept the jobs?

I think a combination of both. I'd say the average veteran—unless he had been an officer or had some specialty that would be valuable in the beginnings of the high-tech era after the war—was like myself. I learned how to shoot a gun, how to march, how to scrub pots and pans in the mess hall, and so on. We were all kind of in the same boat.

You had a real disadvantage in trying to enter other job fields?

Yes. Well, I had no job skills, and, of course, there was a lot of cutting back in the

aircraft industry and other manufacturing and service industries that had grown by leaps and bounds to support the war effort. I had a friend whose parents had a real small machine shop in the Culver City area. Before the war they made lipstick cases. You know, pull the cap off, twist the bottom, and the lipstick would come out. They were easy to make, but it was just a small shop. They could make them by the thousands for one of the lipstick companies; probably not one of the major lipstick manufacturers. During the war they developed the capability of making cartridge cases. They probably built their business, oh, a hundred fold. But after the war they had to go back to lipstick casings or lipstick containers or something. So they went from, let's say, four or five people working up to hundreds of people working three shifts around the clock during the war then back down to four or five people working until they could get into something else. I believe they got into manufacturing for one of the first ballpoint pen companies.

Your dad must have felt that he was important during the war. He was still in the aircraft industry and still in design?

Yes.

And even if one of his designs didn't end up being the latest fighter jet or whatever, the process of working towards that . . .

There were a lot of disappointments.

Was it at the end of the war when the company was no longer the same and your dad left it?

That would have been about '54 or '55 when Northrop and his good close friends were pushed out of the company.

So all the way through the Korean War, he was still . . .

Of course, immediately after the war, there were a lot of developments . . . jet aircraft had just been developed toward the end of the war. Some of the technology that came from Russian and German scientists came to this country after 1946 and '47. There were great strides in, I'd say, the ten years after the war. My father was deeply involved in a lot of that.

My wife and I got married in 1950. I left the insurance company shortly after that. I overheard in the men's room that there was an opening that would be a better job for me. My immediate superior and a couple of the vice presidents came into the men's room while I was in the stall. They were discussing the opening and it was agreed that I was the logical one for the job. But nowhere could they find three people who could do the job as quickly and as well as I was able to do it, so they were going to leave me where I was. So I started making moves. My wife and I moved to Texas for about eighteen months. I worked for a small oil company down there as a full charge accountant. We had to leave after eighteen months because the west Texas dust just didn't agree with our first child. We thought he was going to die several times. So we came back. Late '52, probably, we got back to southern California.

Just before we came back was when Northrop and his close friends were all pushed out of the company. Through a friend of my father's, who was at that time the personnel director at Northrop, I got a job at Northrop as an engineering budget supervisor. I was there until '57. I then graduated to supervisor of engineering budgets. I got in a tangle with the vice-president one day because I thought we had to stop wasting customers' money. At that time we had engineers who didn't have their security clearances sitting with their feet on

the desk reading comic books. Yet their time was being charged to government contracts. I'm still just too goddamn logical.

Again, I started looking and went to work as a business systems analyst and salesman for about a year and a half. Then I became a fire fighter in southern California. It wasn't long before I was filling an administrative position. A few years later I discovered, one morning, that there was too much traffic and no place for the kids to play safely where we lived, so we started looking. It took about three years, but I made the move then to a fire department in northern California. I went in as a fireman; gave up some money and also gave up my rank to make that move. But, again, it was a very short time before I was in an administrative management position. I worked there until 1973; reached a plateau there.

Where was that? What community was it?

That was in Petaluma. Maybe I was a little feisty, but I disagreed with the city manager and we had frequent arguments. I supported the city and did the job I was supposed to do, but there were some differences between me and the city manager, so again I started looking. I went to work for the state of California. I spent the last eleven years before I retired in 1981 as Assistant State Fire and Rescue Coordinator in the governor's office for emergency services in California.

Since I retired, I have had a travel agency for a little while and I have had a consulting business for a little while. We purchased a property at Tahoe fourteen years ago. For almost ten years we were just weekenders. We decided it was time to move up there full-time almost four years ago now.

Big change in careers, from accountant to records . . .

. . . insurance, oil . . . in the oil, I got involved in some cotton activities in southern Cal or in Texas, also. Then back into aircraft—it grew into aircraft and aerospace—and business systems analysis in sales, fire service, coordination service, and I had this little picky stuff. I'm still busy now, too busy. I do a lot of work for non-profit organizations. I'm involved in the Douglas County Republicans as well as the Coast Guard Auxiliary at Lake Tahoe, and church work.

In what way do you think the war changed the world? What did it do to your life, do you think?

Like many, many others, other than perhaps being away to summer camp—I never had the opportunity to go spend a couple of weeks in the summer with the Grandma—my time in the service was the first real time I had been away from home for any period of time. I had been away over weekends or away for a week. When I was in sea scouts, and much younger, we had summer camp for a week or two week period occasionally. But I had never really been away from home. When I went in the Coast Guard, I didn't have a lot of responsibility. [My pay was] \$21.00 a month and if I spent it all on pay day, I still had a place to sleep and three square meals a day. But I was trying to improve myself and, aboard ship, I would spend some time studying to get another stripe on my cuff, which I did. Had my service career lasted longer, I would have continued to study to get some chevrons of some sort on my upper arm. I, perhaps, might have taken a crack at officer candidate school and so on. Those were all possibilities. The last days in the Coast Guard—even up until the time I actually was handed my discharge and walked out the gate and into Long Beach—there was still talk about reenlisting in the regular Coast

Guard. I had that opportunity. There was talk of, given some more experience, you will have a chance at officer candidate school. There was a career offered there. But I chose to get out, go back to school, and get in the quote “the real world”.

A lot of what I learned I didn't realize at the time, perhaps, that I learned it. A lot of guys helped me in later years. There was a comradeship and a closeness in the service, particularly aboard ship. I indicated earlier I think there were two types of people: the regular Coast Guards, those who had been in for years; some had been at Pearl Harbor, and others had been in some engagements earlier in the war, and the other half of us who were just punk kids away from home. But there was a closeness there. It wasn't: “OK, this card game is for us regular people. You reserves, you're over there, and you're not part of the team.” We were all part of the team. We shared everything; card games, stories . . .

What kind of card games did you play?

Pinochle for the most part.

Did you play for money or just entertainment?

Mostly just for entertainment because none of us had a great deal of money. There were some who were betting a lot on crap games. I think those were some of the old regulars who had money on the books. There were both regulars and some reserves who had enlisted years ahead of us. There were some who were married and had a young family at home. It was not much different than a kid getting out of high school and going to work someplace today. Here's an old guy who had never gotten married and he just spends his paycheck every payday. And

here's a guy who was working hard; he's got a family. And here's a young fellow who has a hard time dating girls. You know, a real mix of people. So there's no effect by any individual or any group of individuals. In those days, there was no segregation. We were all one, big group . . . the exception being that there were very few minorities in the service at that time, at least in the Coast Guard. There were a group of blacks in the Coast Guard that were kind of elite. The only thing they were allowed to be, and the Navy was the same, was a steward. They had separate quarters equivalent to the chief's quarters. They had good living conditions. They wore a clean white uniform all the time. We were dirty half of the time. Their only job was to serve the officers in the officer's mess.

How many officers were there on a liberty ship?

There was a skipper, the exec, we had a communications officer who didn't know anything about radios (he had been a shoe salesman before the war); we had two others . . . I guess there would be six officers.

I'm assuming the officers were segregated.

Yes. They had either a separate state room or they shared a state room with one other officer. There was a doctor, too, so seven officers total. The doctor was probably the friendliest. Why, I don't know. Maybe it was just his personality.

The real running of the ship, other than the navigation and technical aspects, was done by the chief warrant officer, a career man like the master sergeant in the Army, and the bosun mates, the lower class sergeants. They were the ones who really ran the ship.

They scheduled all the duty for the men?

Right.

Your job pretty much had to be those kind of things?

Yes. I spent a fair amount of time as a mess cook, assisting the cooks in the kitchen. Some of that was a godsend. I'd stay up all night and work with the baker. Sometimes I'd sleep during the day if it wasn't too warm in the dormitory area. I'd do whatever was necessary. I didn't mind any assignment. Nothing was a quote, "dirty job".

Was the morale good?

Yes. I felt that the morale was very good. There was enough horseplay that very rarely did anyone get edgy with anyone else.

Even a hundred days of . . . ?

Yes. Even [during] a hundred days [at sea]. It was obvious to everyone that if you were the outsider and you didn't fit in, if you didn't accept what was going on, that everybody else was going to get on you and your life would be hell. So we shared everything. If someone had a special assignment of some sort and he was doing it all alone and running out of daylight hours, several others would pitch in and help him. It didn't make any difference what anybody's assignment was, before the entire day's work for the whole crew was taken care of, a whole mixture of people would be bailing out those who had a tougher job or a slower job, so that everybody could quit and everybody could eat their evening meal at the right time. We would sit down and drink coffee and play cards that evening or see a movie on the deck or whatever. There were no outcasts at all. There were some people who, by their own choosing, kept themselves

out of some activities. In any group of more than two people, there's going to be one that doesn't get along all the time. But for the most part, there was no conflict—perfect harmony.

You said that you'd gotten a couple of things out of the military that you didn't recognize at the time that served you well. What do you think you got from the military that helped you in your life?

Probably an extension of the discipline I had learned in catholic elementary school and high school. A lot [of what I learned] tied into my father's background and the way he treated me, also.

Your father, I'm guessing, asked hard questions. To get anything out of your father, you had to prove the logic of what you wanted.

There had to be a logical explanation. My father was a devout catholic. He had a cigarette box on his desk (it held two packs of cigarettes if you filled it up and was bronze in color) that had a crucifix on the lid. People who worked with and for my father, when they were called to his office, when the subject of the discussion to take place was unknown, the first thing they looked at was that cigarette box. If the lid was on properly and the crucifix showing, it was a friendly meeting, just a planning meeting or whatever. If the lid to the cigarette box was turned over so the crucifix was inside the box and not visible, they knew it was time for an ass chewing. It was just a little idiosyncrasy that he had. He was not going to use violent language with the crucifix open on his desk.

To the best of my knowledge, he was loved by all the men who worked for him. But he enjoyed a good practical joke. He summoned one of his subordinates, a close friend, to his

office one afternoon. The guy had made some kind of mistake. He knew he was in trouble. When he got to the office, the crucifix was covered up. Just after he walked in, a couple of other people walked in. Then a nurse walked in with a tray and a large jar of Vaseline. My father said, "Drop your pants and bend over." The guy was shocked. Everybody else laughed. That was the end of it. That was the punishment for making whatever mistake it was. Whatever tension that had developed up to that point was taken care of. Nothing else needed to be said.

The war to most people represents a significant milestone in the history of the world . . . certainly in the history of this country. What changes did it make in America?

The war involved many, many technological developments. We got radios down to thumb size. We have radar, television and numerous technological advancements. Medicine was another field that benefited greatly from the war, by necessity. Perhaps there wasn't the funding, at the government level or at the private sector level, to get into the research and development activities before the war. If I thought long enough, I could come up with some social areas that have benefited from things that happened during the war, or how people's attitudes changed during the war. You see very little of that going back in history. Benefits that accrued from earlier wars were on a much smaller scale: bandages, medicine, and so on.

Since World War II, I don't think we've made as many strides, or at least not as giant strides; not from Korea, certainly not from Vietnam, maybe more from the Cold War atmosphere than from anything else. Improving the aircraft and similar technologies during or since the war has

probably added to the space program. I can't think of anything other than just the militarization that has occurred since the war that is as significant.

World War II was a great experience. I didn't regret a minute of it. Gosh, there were probably days that I got up in the morning and said, "What am I doing here?," but I can't remember them. I remember a lot of hard work, a lot of study, and a lot of attempting to improve myself. Basically I wouldn't trade a minute of it for anything in the world. I did get a lot from it. And I hope I gave back to somebody else a fair share, too.

Is the country better for your generation's efforts?

Well, I think my generation perhaps had more patriotism going in. We probably had more incentive for that patriotism than those of the Vietnam era. We had grown up with heroes . . . Babe Ruth . . . God only knows all the sports figures . . . Jack Armstrong, the Wheaties boy. We'd had nothing but heroes. Before Hollywood got into the war-type propaganda pictures, I can remember Saturday afternoon matinees and the little twelve to fifteen minute serials. You had to go fifteen weeks in a row to get the whole story. I remember Ralph Bird. One time he was Dick Tracy and another time he was some sort of a naval officer, and then he was something else. If it wasn't Ralph Bird in all these heroic parts, it was Tom Mix or some other hero. We had heroes and we were primed for the patriotism that we displayed in World War II. As our technology in the country developed, and the world became smaller with better radio, television and almost instant contact with the whole rest of the world, we lost the heroes. By the time Vietnam came along, there was not that hero worship. That generation had

not been primed with heroes. They weren't engendered with real patriotism. There was reason to object to the war in Vietnam, and they took every advantage of those reasons. And the next generations, they're going to face more and more problems in that regard.

ROBERT L. McDONALD

Ken Adams: We can begin with who are you, where you were born, when were you born, and a little of your background.

Robert L. McDonald: Well, my real name is Robert L. McDonald. I was born in Reno, Nevada, March 15, 1920. I attended local schools; South Side School, B. D. Billingshurst School, and Reno High School.

What were your parents names and what did your father do?

My father's name was Joseph F. McDonald. My mother's name was Leola McDonald. My dad arrived in Tonopah, Nevada, when he was six years old. My mother came to Sparks, Nevada, from Oregon when she was a teenage girl. My dad was a very devout Irish-Catholic, but a very broad-minded Irish-Catholic. To raise my brother and I, he had to be that type of person.

He was in the newspaper business here in Nevada. He graduated from the University of Nevada with a degree in electrical engineering.

His entire young life, when he was working in Tonopah in the mines and selling newspapers, he was hoping someday to get out of Tonopah. He got his degree at Nevada and the first job he had offered to him was to run a power plant in Tonopah, which he declined, and instead took a job as a newspaper reporter for the *Nevada State Journal*. That was his career, in the newspaper business. Because that was part of the program of Speidel newspapers, he was retired when he was sixty-five, at which time he was publisher of the *Reno Evening Gazette* and the *Nevada State Journal*. This was after the merger of the two papers. My mother, during the early years, was a society editor for the *Nevada State Journal*. Her pay, I recall, was ten dollars a week.

The newspaper must have been your life, then, growing up?

That's right. That's the reason why I went to law school. I had heard a lot about newspapers all my life. I sold them a lot when I was young . . . both papers.



ROBERT L. McDONALD,
430TH AAFRTU, 1944

I had a brother named Joe McDonald, Jr., who graduated from the University of Nevada. He took a job on Wake Island before the war, wound up fighting the Japanese on Wake and was taken a prisoner, and then spent the rest of the war in a prison camp in Japan. At that time, I was in the Aleutian Islands flying P-38's. I knew about Joe before I left to report for duty. My parents received an official Naval communiqué that Joe had been killed in action.

He had coached football at a Catholic grammar school, probably just to get a credit here at the university, so the bishop decided he'd have a funeral for him. My dad was highly against having a funeral for him. Bishop Dwyer called my dad and told him what he was going to do and my dad said, "No, you're not going to do it."

Bishop Dwyer said, "Joe, you run the newspaper; I'll run the Catholic church." So they had a funeral.

I was up in the Aleutians and didn't know anything about this. All I knew was that he was dead. One day I was in a tent with another pilot. We got mail very seldom, but he got a letter from his sister that said, "That was sure great what they heard about Bob's brother," which was encouraging, but I didn't know what "was great" meant.

Eventually Joe came home and he was in fine shape. He'd spent a couple of weeks in rehab in the Philippines and then came home. He looked wonderful. He still liked rice. [laughter] He wasn't really mad at the Japanese.

Did you go and visit his grave?

No, I don't think so. [laughter]

What was Reno like, growing up?

It was great. It was small. You knew everybody. You knew all the policemen. They all knew you by your first name. If they saw you walking down Virginia Street fighting with your girlfriend, when she's on one side of the street and you're on the other, and you're yelling at each other, they'd come and load you both in the car and take you home or get you back together. They were a very helpful police department, then, with the kids. No matter what you got caught doing, if it was within reason, they took care of you. They'd help you, and lecture you, and say, "Now, you better go home."

Reno was just a wonderful place to live. We used to fish in the river right across from the Riverside Hotel. It was great fishing there. You get caught fishing by the dam, which was against the law, the game warden, Brownie,

would take your rod away from you. He lived in about, oh, the seventeen hundred block or maybe the twelve hundred block on South Virginia. He said, "When you want to go fishing again, you can come out and pick up your pole at my house." [laughter]

Where did you live? What section of town?

Seven hundred block of South Virginia But you never got a ticket; you just had to walk out and get your rod and go fishing again. That's kind of the way Reno was. All the people were just nice.

Talk about Bill Graham, he was great to kids. During the Dempsey-Tunney fights, I'd go in there. The *Nevada State Journal* would always put out an extra. He let me go through there and get a silver dollar for every paper I sold. They were all bettors. He'd bring the papers in, move them around, and go put some out in the alley. I picked up a lot of money. There were a lot of stories about him. My father was very influential in helping him get to the federal penitentiary, but they were still good friends. [laughter] He was always a friend of mine. I never was his lawyer, but he'd send me business quite a bit. I didn't know McKay that well, other than "hi".

The principals that Reno High had and the other schools, they were all helpful. Of course, there was a different atmosphere then and there was a different type of kid.

Reno High School was on Fourth Street where the Sundowner is now?

Yes. In there

How many were in your graduating class?

Well, I don't know. There was about five hundred in the school, probably.

So you probably had a 100 or 125 in your graduating class?

Yes. Something in there.

That was the only high school, so Reno was pretty small.

That's right.

And South Side, where you started school, only had four rooms in it and that

Right. It was a good school. I was fortunate enough to be the student body president at Reno High. The year before, they were going to run me for student body president. Earl Wooster was the principal. He called me in and he said, "You can't run now because you're about to get kicked out of school for demerits. If you'll straighten up, you can run next semester." Guess it was the semester of the next year.

I straightened right up and ran and won. But that's the way the schools were. The teachers seemed more helpful than now. Maybe because it was a lesser crowd. It was more familiar. You knew your teachers and they knew you, personally, or they knew your family. You'd go in and sit down and talk to any of them any time you wanted. You didn't have to make appointments . . . just knock on the door and walk in. It was a great atmosphere.

Did you take ROTC in high school?

I was expelled from ROTC in high school. [laughter]

Did you play sports?

Yes, I played football. I was an all-state guard. I didn't play baseball, they didn't have

a team. We played for the American Legion in the summertime. Bud Beasley was our coach.

Beasley was your coach? Beasley still teaches.

Well, Beasley will always be coaching. He was assistant football coach when I was playing, too. Herb Foster . . .

What year did you graduate from high school?

1938. Then I went to Santa Clara and got hurt playing football in spring practice, so that ended football. I stayed there for three years. My junior year was a little marginal because I had a couple of slot machines in my room. I was rooming with my friend, Peterson, and he didn't believe in those. But he allowed it. I mean, we got along fine. He's still a close friend. The Jesuits couldn't go into your closet. That's the only place you could keep your hidden things in. I had the slot machines on a small sewing machine table that I could reel in the closet at night.

And then go ahead and put them out when people visit you. Did you deal twenty-one, too?

No. I got the slot machines from a classmate and a close friend. They lived down by us.

I had a close friend there, a priest named Father George Lucy. He had a great background. He was an all-city basketball player from San Francisco. Santa Clara had student flying lessons. Each university, there was a name for the program, was given an allocation where they could send so many students. Then the university or the college had its own rules and regulations as to how you would get into that flying program. Well, I got into it because Father Lucy and I were good friends and he was the head of the selection

committee. So I got a pilot's license when I was a junior at the University of Santa Clara.

I went, practically just across the street, and filled out some papers for me to join the Air Corps after I got licensed. I passed what you call a Class B physical. Class B means that you had something that wasn't quite perfect. I was a little green/blue colorblind. But they were going to take class B's . . . that was the information. I went to the priest, the head disciplinarian that was in our building, and said, "Father, I'm going to leave school. I'm going to go into the Air Corps."

He said, "Would you mind taking your slot machines with you when you leave?" [laughter]

You hadn't fooled him at all. [laughter]

Not once. I took my slot machines and came to Reno. I didn't get called and I didn't get called. My dad was a very close political and personal friend—I emphasize personal—with Pat McCarran. One day he had me call . . .

Does that mean that Pat came to your house and those kind of things?

Oh, yes. He was there a lot. Every time he came to town, he and my dad were in there. Of course, when I was young, I never knew what was happening. I didn't pay any attention to it.

But I called him in Washington and told him my problem. He said, "I'll call you back." He called me back in about three days and he said, "Go back to Moffett Field and take another physical."

I got in my car and went down to Moffett Field. They had that Japanese colorblind test . . . that Ishihara test. Part of that test would be circular lines and paths going in circles and all kinds of colors and you were

supposed to take your finger and follow the trail around until you wind up in the center of the circle. I couldn't do that. That's how I had flunked the first one. Some of the numbers I couldn't quite read.

They'd just go through and stop at a page, "What's that number?"

"Eighty-eight. That one's sixty-two."

I practiced in Reno with one of these books that Ryan Poulsen, Russ Poulsen's brother, had. He was an optometrist. So I had the numbers down pretty good. I even knew most of the pages. I got to that Ishihara thing and the doctor said, "You don't want to look at that." I've never known whether Pat McCarran passed me or the doctor passed me. [laughter]

You suspect that McCarran did.

And immediately was called into the Air Force.

When was that? What month and year was that?

I graduated as a second lieutenant in October of 1941. When did the war start?

December of 1941.

OK. I graduated about three months before the war started. So you back that up about five months and that's when I went into cadet training.

So in the spring of 1941.

I went down to Taft, California, for primary and then . . .

What did your parents think? Were your parents pleased that you were in the service and going to be a pilot?

Oh, yes. My dad was a great, a cooperative father. "If that's what you want to do and if it's legal and over and above board, give it your best."

During the wait for this second test, I was working for the highway department and I wasn't . . .

In Carson City . . . ?

In Reno, surveying . . . Louis Vince and I were surveying out on Highway 40 there. I was glad to get out of there. I went down to Hemet Field for my primary.

When you were in college? What did you study?

I was a poly-sci major.

Did you think about becoming a lawyer then?

No.

You were just going to school?

I was just going to school. I had no idea about being a lawyer. Only one thing I did know, I did not want to be in the newspaper business. [laughter] I did know that.

I graduated from Stockton, one of the early classes there of advanced flight training. Usually you'd go to Texas, but they were moving these training schools around the countryside. I got to go to Stockton and graduate from there. Just before graduation, I signed a contract to fly P-40s from New York to Africa. Four of us did, for a thousand a month. And that was big time money. Somebody knew that the war was going to start, because about two weeks before we graduated, those contracts were immediately cancelled. I graduated as a second lieutenant and . . .

You had a great contract but then the contract got cancelled?

Yes. As a second lieutenant I went up to Portland, Oregon, and flew

That's basic flight training you went through there?

No. That was advanced. I graduated from Stockton in advanced flight school and got commissioned there.

What was the training like?

Like? Oh, it was great. I learned to fly AT-6s and it was good training, good instructors, good ground school. It was tough. They washed a lot of people out. At the end you take a physical about every two weeks. I was right close, alphabetically, to a fellow from New Mexico who was my good friend. He was a classmate of mine. If it got down to the colorblind test, well, he'd take two of them. I never took that chance again. And I don't know, yet, why they were so strict on it, because I never had any problems with it. I can tell red from green.

Then I was sent to Portland to fly in a fighter squadron called the 54th Fighter Squadron. I flew P-43's, which is a small, big engine, fighter plane made by Republic. It was a little sister ship to the, eventually, P-47 fighter. This had a landing gear that was build-in. It was tough. It was good to fly, but boy, landing was a tough job. Then the war broke out.

Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor happened?

Yes, I remember very well. I was single at the time. Portland was a big stop for United

in those days. The United stewardesses lived in a housing development not far from the air base. So the night before the war started, there were a bunch of us down there having a party and doing a little excessive drinking and whatever you do at a party. Then I went home. So, when you ask the question where was I when the war started, I was lying in bed with a hangover. The sirens went off and I jumped out of bed as everybody else did. We ran down to the flight line. The first guys there got the first airplanes. I wasn't the first one there, and all that was left was an AT-6; what I had been flying at flight school. [laughter].

I said to the squadron commander, "What do you want me to do?"

He said, "Get in that airplane and get the hell out of here. Go up the Colombia River and, before you run out of gas, bring it back and land it." [laughter]

We didn't have any ammunition on the base. We were pretty well trained, but we didn't have any ammo. Now history shows, I guess, there was some submarines out there. At the time, that's what we all thought it was, afterwards. But that really didn't happen.

They didn't take any chances; they just tried to get all the aircraft off the ground so they couldn't be

To just get them out of there. After that was over, well, I called my girlfriend. Gloria was and is her name, and

She lived here in Reno?

I went with her all through school. I started going with her when I was in the ninth grade and she was in the seventh grade, I think, or eighth.

My dad and mom brought her to Portland so we could get married. Well, they transferred

us out of there in the middle of the night as they're driving up to Portland for the wedding. [laughter] I'm in Paine Field in Washington. They ran into the chaplain at the base. It was a big secret move, but he knew. He told them where we were transferred to, and they drove up there, and two or three days later I got married in Everett, Washington.

We were the first ones to get the P-38. We trained in those for a while. The Japanese came into the Aleutian Islands, so we went to the Aleutian Islands. That was for a sixty day, temporary duty. We went back two years later.

You're assigned temporary duty for sixty days and you get back two years later. Still, you had to know that there was a war coming along and that being a pilot, you were going to be someplace and it was going to be highly dangerous. How did you feel when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

I knew some people over there that were killed. I felt real bad about that. I was ready to go to war and anxious to go. I knew I was going to go. I was never the stateside officer, so to speak. I mean, I enjoyed being overseas. I missed my wife, and missed Reno, and missed all the things that people miss, but . . . I don't know how to describe it.

In some ways training is like practicing to play football or something.

Right.

You're waiting for the game.

That's right. Then there's the game. And there was a hatred built up in you. You got a hatred built up in you, I don't know how, or why, but everybody did. In answer to your question how did you feel about it, I was

anxious to go. So we went up to the Aleutian Islands.

Do you know about when this was . . . this is mid-1942, about?

Oh, no. It's way before that. When did the war start?

December of 1941.

This would be about February. Right after they hit Pearl Harbor we were right there. We flew over to Spokane and then into Anchorage. Then from Anchorage we went out and landed at an island called Unimak. There were only eight of us that made it on the first flight.

As we got into Adak Station, which is probably a hundred, two hundred miles from Dutch Harbor, where the Japanese attacked the day before, they were attacking again, but they were on a carrier. Adak Station had a bunch of old P-40's that had been stuck up there for years doing nothing. They didn't get out; I mean, they just couldn't get transferred. We came in and landed going to the north and some Japanese planes came over. The P-40 pilots had never heard of an airplane that could land into the wind and then take off with the wind. We just turned around and took off downwind and started chasing those Japanese pilots in the Zeroes around. The weather was real misty. You'd see an airplane and then he'd be lost in the mist. It was terrible. We got all mixed up and we didn't know what we were really doing and it wasn't too well organized. I was flying along and I looked out my right side and there's a great big red circle on the airplane right next to me! It was a Japanese Zero fighter. He went to the right and I went to the left and we never did see each other again. You

couldn't do anything in that type of weather. But we survived.

A B-26 flew right into their carrier and sank it. They brought a load of groundmen up there and one of them was a Japanese interpreter. We only had eight pilots at the time and eight airplanes, but we had to have the cooks and the mechanics. They brought them in by transport airplanes and, some, by boat, later. The interpreter could hear on the radio these Japanese pilots screaming and hollering, looking for their landing field, which was the carrier that was sunk. They went down; they never did try to land on Unimak. Crazy, but . . .

Even that early in the war, they demonstrated a willingness to die rather than compromise?

Oh, certainly. This is too long a story to get into, but later we had some scary missions out there. We flew what you know as a single seat airplane, a P-38. Way south of there was a little weather station. They were there during the peace time. There were probably ten, twelve people running this weather station. Everyday this Japanese bomber would come in and drop bombs on them. Never did hit them. We had a big meeting about four o'clock one morning and the purpose was to send two P-38s out there with the B-24s as a navigator. We'd fly his wings . . . you know, fly beside him and intercept this bomber, because he dropped his bombs almost the same time everyday. I grabbed a fellow named Pope by the arm, "Come on, let's go."

And he said, "OK."

Then we had to meet the captain, the pilot of the B-24. It happened to be Earl Edmunds from Reno, Nevada. We called him Axle Edmunds. He was a skier born and raised in Truckee. It was dark in there and I didn't know it was Edmunds, then I got to see it was him. But anyway, we went on this mission and we

got bad weather. We got close to the island, looked around, and everything was closed behind us. We couldn't see one island—not one. Pope was a first lieutenant and I was a second lieutenant and he says, "We're going back." We had just got there. We never flew over fifty feet above the water the whole time, even the B-24 bomber, because once you get up above this stuff, well, you can't get back down. You didn't have the navigational aids that they have today and so you'd stay under, always. That was a rule. So we just hugged this B-24, and finally we got back to the back side of Unimak.

Edmunds, a first lieutenant, said, "If you fly straight for five or six minutes, you'll sight land."

Then Pope, the other fighter pilot, said, "I am the commanding officer. We'll all fly straight until we see the land."

Edmunds said, "OK."

We kicked in. I was on the right side and finally I saw land and told Pope, "I'm landing on the beach." I had no gas left, for one thing. I mean, it read empty. We never did see each other for a while, there. Pope claimed that we passed each other two or three times. I didn't even know that.

He said, "I found a little road and I see your airplane. Turn left." So I turned left and put my gear down. The road was here and I was here and I just couldn't get it over there fast enough. If I'd come in this way, I'd have overshot it, anyway. I missed by about the width of the road. I couldn't go around and come back because of the weather and the fact that I didn't have any fuel. So I landed it. The nose gear comes up and I was going downhill. [laughter] The nose gear was bouncing around sideways. It's as funny as hell. I didn't get hurt very bad, I cut my knee a little bit and took the clock out. I unscrewed the clock and put it in my pocket.

The next day they did the same thing with two other guys. They intercepted the bomber and blew him away. They got Navy Crosses and Distinguished Flying Crosses and they got all kinds of . . .

Did you get to keep the clock?

I still got it at my house.

So you got a clock and they got the ribbon. [laughter] Why did you take the clock?

I don't know. Jeez, it was an eight day clock. I imagine the airplane's still there. They had no way of getting it out of there.

Then we moved on down to Adak. Now, we have twenty-five airplanes . . .

You said you were assigned to the Aleutians for sixty days, temporary duty, and you ended up staying two years?

Yes. I came home once to what they call a fighter command school in Orlando, Florida. There was a lot of the crazy stuff happening then, too. My time in Adak, I did shoot down one airplane.

You were flying combat patrols out of the Aleutians? All the time, there were Japanese aircraft in the air?

We were flying to Kiska, where the Japanese were stationed. That was their main base. We'd fly back and forth to Kiska. Sometimes by ourselves . . . I mean, just P-38s. The first mission used everything that was available; B-17s, B-24s, B-25s, P-38s. We all went in and we did pretty well. We surprised them that time and blew their navy away. It wasn't anything like Pearl Harbor, but they had a lot of ships there. We blew all those up and

we strafed. We got in a fight and our CO, the greatest guy, got killed right in front of me. The Zero pulled up in front of him going up and he and the engineering officer both went up and I saw it . . . a big flash and they were gone.

Eventually I was returned to the States and was sent to Glendale, California, as a P-38 instructor. I just didn't like that. My wife moved down there. I liked the area and liked the ocean. We got to go fishing once in a while on a day off. But I was anxious to go back. I volunteered for every overseas duty that was available.

We were sent up to Washington, again, where we were supposed to be special pilots. Another fellow and myself were allowed to pick out the pilots that we wanted. We were going to fly P47N's that hadn't even been off the line yet, and go to Okinawa and some other island. We were going to be the first land base airplanes to really attack Japan. This was a hand picked group. We were training in Nebraska, and the last minute our CO got a call from Washington and was transferred to Europe. So here we are now, I'm all ready for this, and no CO. And then that deal—nobody ever knew why—blew up. We got a new CO. I don't think he had anything to do with it, the plans from the Air Force were just changed. They sent us to Hawaii.

I, kind of on my own, got out to Iwo Jima; I hitchhiked out there. I was a major by then and it was hard to get a job because the squadron commanders were usually captains. They're not going to move me into a squadron commander position. I got out to Iwo and the squadron commander had been killed two days before in a banzai attack. The Japanese that were living in those caves around there came through the tents with knives and guns and killed some guys, and one of them was the squadron commander. I got there two days after that and I reported to the general.

I went out there as an equipment officer, or something like that, and I didn't know a pair of boots from the flap cap, you know. He said, "Did you ever fly a P-51?"

I said, "One hour."

He said, "Well, go down there and fly. You're a squadron commander and you're going on a mission tomorrow."

I said, "Good." So I did my best. I flew out there for about nine to ten months, I guess. I was there when the war ended.

In the Aleutians, did they measure in missions? You were there two years and did . . . ?

Well, I was on missions. We lost a lot of pilots up there because of weather more than anything else. We had a few get shot down, but we lost a lot of pilots by weather. It was interesting to watch those Japanese pilots on a good day, which was maybe one in ten or maybe not that many. It would be like today, where you could see blue sky. You'd come around and be going in towards Kiska where their base was. These Zeros, they'd be flying around in the air. They'd roll up in front of you and they'd do loops, all kinds of aerobatics. They'd get, actually, above you and blow you away, you know. But they were great pilots, those Japanese Navy pilots; I mean, really good pilots. They were the old-timers, evidently, since . . .

Were you guys as good as pilots? Your airplane wasn't as good.

It's hard to compare airplanes. Our airplanes had an armor plate on it, their's didn't.

So you could get hit and still survive it?

Yes. If you got hit in the right place, around the cockpit and in that area. Your

wings would catch fire just as good as their's. The P-38 was a lot faster but they weren't as maneuverable. If you get in a dog fight with a Zero and come around like this, he can get right inside of you. The P-38 wasn't that maneuverable. I had a Zero on me one time. This was a clear day, and I saw him back there. I was probably ten thousand feet in the air and I hit the deck and he was gone. I mean, he couldn't catch me. They weren't that fast, but they were a lot more maneuverable. They were good pilots . . . the early pilots.

So you could outrun them?

Absolutely.

How about armament-wise? Were your guns as accurate as theirs?

Oh, yes. Better. We had 450's and a 20 millimeter cannon on that P-38. That would shoot 1250 rounds a minute, and blow . . . I mean, if you hit it in the right place, it was a great . . .

Did you get to be a pretty good shot with those things?

No. I was a lousy shot. [laughter] I hit an ace the first two weeks I was up there and did not get a good shot. I was a terrible shot. I had always thought the tracers threw me. If it didn't have tracers, I think I would have done better. You see that tracer going out there and it goes this way. I think, instead of watching the other airplane, I watched the tracer or something. I'm not great, but I'm an average shotgun shooter.

One of the ways they train people on hand-eye coordination was shooting clay pigeons.

Well, I hit them by the thousands.

You weren't very good at that, either?

Yes. I was excellent.

Oh, you were excellent. It didn't help.

No. It didn't help a bit. I still couldn't hit anything in that airplane. I had a lot of good chances. But I couldn't. I shot those clay pigeons. All you got to do was sign up. You had to shoot so many a month. Well, most guys didn't want to do them and I'd just go down and sign Bill Smith and Joe Oaks and heck, I was doing a lot of them. I was good at that, but I couldn't hit that airplane, no way. As good a strafer as anybody, I guess. You can't miss. At air gunnery I was bad.

For the two years that you were there, how often did you fly?

Well, I'd fly probably three times a week.

What did you do in between, on the days that you didn't fly?

I slept most of the time and played poker at night. I slept and slept. There was nothing to do there. The weather was so terrible you didn't want to ever go outside. We lived in the tents. Right at the end we got Quonset huts and they were better. And the food was OK. I mean, it was clean. There were no bugs . . . too cold for bugs. They had a lot of good things about the Aleutian Islands. There's several good things.

There was no place to go for leave? You couldn't go on pass and go to a bar or chase girls? There wasn't any of that to do at all?

Once in a while, if you got lucky, they'd send you up to Anchorage to pick up an

airplane or something. You could always stay there if the weather was bad and you didn't want to leave or something. They called it RON weather, that means Remain Over Night weather. You'd maybe get three days that way. They knew what you were doing. They didn't care. And there was no radio thing in the Air Force.

When I was in Glendale I used to bring guys up to Reno. I got in trouble, too; terrible trouble. I got grounded when I was in the town and . . .

Your flight instructors before the war were civilian pilots?

Just out of flight school they were.

But when you became a flight instructor, you had lots and lots of fine . . .

When I started flying in the Air Corps, I had a civilian instructor in what they call primary flying school.

Yes. That's what I meant.

I went to basic and then I had a second lieutenant for an instructor.

When you came back, now the . . .

Then everybody's military.

Now they're military with combat experience.

Right.

You guys must have had a little different attitude. Did you feel differently about training?

Well, the Air Corps, especially fighter pilots, weren't really soldiers, so to speak. If

you see what I'm trying to say, they weren't disciplined that way and they didn't expect it. They expected it in the air. I didn't care if they called me Major or Bob, it didn't make any difference to me as long as they did what I told them.

Did you come back a major from the Aleutians?

No, I came back a Captain. Then when I went off the second time, I was a Major. I could have stayed in, I guess. I wanted to, to which my lovely spouse said, "It's time to get discharged."

I said, "What if I stay in? I could do that and get an automatic promotion to lieutenant colonel for being so much overseas. They'd give that to me."

She said, "Go ahead. And if you want to see me, you can come here to Reno." [laughter] So I got out.

You came back from the Aleutians and you were a flight instructor. How long did you do that?

Probably eight months.

This is the middle of September 1944 when you got . . .

I went out to Iwo in there. I spent a few months in Hawaii and then went to Iwo.

You said you didn't have an assignment so you took a ride on a plane that was going someplace. And you got there and said, "I'm looking for something. I can fly. I'm looking for a job."

Right. Exactly.

And somebody found you one.

Yes. And I liked it. Those were tough missions. We were flying for the toughest pilot that ever walked, and that was Curtis LeMay of the 20th Air Force. He was in Guam. He came over from Europe and took up the 20th Air Force.

Well, we were escorting the B-29 bombers. We'd fly up there with them and then, when they'd get to the target, they'd go over their targets and drop their bombs. That was their orders, to drop bombs on the Tokyo Express. We kind of flushed out the sides. We never went over the targets because there was no reason to unless there were fighters. Some of the bombing wasn't really that accurate after sitting in that airplane, a single seat airplane, a B-51, for eight or ten hours and sometimes a little more. We'd start with belly tanks, fly with belly tanks until they were empty, and then switch to the regular tank. That was a long, hard day whether you fired the guns or just rode.

Then LeMay came out there and things changed fast. He came down to Iwo and said, "There will be no more aerial company. We're going to need it. You guys are going to start strafing and you're going to start shooting rockets. I'll come down every once in a while and I'll look at your pictures to make sure you're doing what you're supposed to."

Our orders were to shoot everything that moved . . . men, women, children, adults . . . whatever. Now, the first time in that part of the Pacific they had a night bombing raid with those B-29s, the lead plane was Curtis LeMay. He got them over the target. I had to follow him. He was just a real leader. He was the "General Patton" of the Air Force, that's what he was. The same type of fighter. I knew the fellow. He was a B-38 pilot in Italy and they dropped 500 pound bombs on a cathedral on Easter Sunday. Not that they were working for LeMay at that time, but he wanted to win the war.

LeMay wanted to fight, but he wanted to win the war.

He didn't want to fight, he wanted it to end.

Didn't want a lot of foolish . . .

He wanted to be a participant. I mean he was . . .

That's kind of what you wanted to do, though, too.

Well, no, I don't know what I wanted to do. I just felt like I wanted to do my share. There were a bunch of Japanese on Iwo. I'd drive by there every time I was going on a mission. I'd go right by and look at them and swear at them and call them bad names, but everybody, practically, did.

You must have had some pretty strong feelings. You knew your brother was alive and a prisoner. And all the stories you had heard about the Japanese—you couldn't be sure what condition your brother was in, or how they were treating him, or anything.

I was not angry, then. When we'd go up there to escort those bombers, I never did know, really, for sure, whether they were bombing where he was, because I didn't know.

I saw the first atom bomb airplane. All of us did . . . anyone who was a pilot, anyway. We had a weather plane from Guam fly over Iwo every morning and report back the weather before we took off. It was just a single B-29. Well, there were no missions on this particular day and there went this B-29 right over Iwo. We all said we couldn't figure why they were flying the weather plane today. I said, "Well, maybe they'll send us up. Maybe there's going

to be a mission." I had no idea of what it was. But that was what it was, as it turned out.

What did you think when you heard about the bomb?

The first one we didn't get much news on. We knew it blew up and killed a lot of people and we thought it was great. I mean, we were all for that.

There wasn't enough information then, you didn't have any idea except there was a big bomb?

That's right. We didn't know anything about it. Well, on the second bomb, I was going on a rest leave; I was in a B-29 going to Oahu for a week. The captain flying the B-29 called and said, "The war has just ended."

Then he went into Guam. I had four pilots with me and our plan was to hitchhike, get another B-29 going to Hawaii to go on our rest leave. Nobody was going to leave. We didn't have any liquor and we didn't know anybody. We were officers but in the officer's club, those officers had their name on their bottle, and if you didn't have a name . . . I went in there and got talking to the bartender. Eventually he found out I was from Reno and he said, "You wouldn't know a Dr. Lombardi, from Reno, would you?"

I said, "Yes, I do, very well." [laughter]

So he got ahold of him, and Louie came down. He was head of the hospital on Guam at the time. We had a lot of food, a lot of booze—anything we wanted. He didn't drink himself, but we had a great party there before we ever went to Hawaii. He told me that night he'd amputated something like 128 legs. People that were there, that I ran into over the years, said he was a front line doctor. And he was our family doctor down in Reno. I knew him

real well. Oh man, had I known him. So it worked out good.

After my rest leave, the war was over, and all the other guys went to the States. I went back to Iwo and got a reprimand from the colonel, the group commander. The day after the war, they called the squadron and all the fighter pilots out to do exercises. My squadron didn't go because I was in Hawaii. I had to fly clear across the Pacific to get an official reprimand because my squadron didn't obey. We had the best record in that group. We had more kills and less losses; and that's how you judged it. It wasn't that I was that great, but they were just great kids and great . . .

Somebody else could shoot . . .

I had a kid named Watkins. He could hit anything. Yes, he could hit them; he did good.

After you stopped escorting the B-29s, you started strafing. What altitude did you do that at?

Ten, twenty, fifty thousand feet . . . the lower the better . . . It's safer.

What kind of resistance did you meet on the ground? The Japanese Air Force wasn't a factor anymore, was it?

No, we got rid of most of them. I didn't get any of them when I was on missions. We got most of them out of flying school when they were training. They didn't have guns or anything. Our guys would just go in there and blow them away. I mean, it was war.

You said that the pilots that you flew against off of the Aleutians were good pilots. They were experienced, early in the war, and by the end, that they were just . . .

They were still training. The ones we saw were just terrible. We had a mission one day in northern Japan. We got in and out before they started shooting. It wasn't what you'd called a real success, but we probably burned up four or five airplanes. One squadron would go down the runway this way. Another one come over this way and pulled that way. And a third one would go this way. We didn't have any crashes and it worked good. You stay there as long as you can, as long as you feel safe, and then you're out of the area. And that's a personal experience.

I was the lead airplane and I pulled out probably twenty miles from the target when my engine failed. I'm up, probably, twelve thousand feet. Nobody can wait for you because fuel was important; it was really important. Everybody else headed south for Hiro. I was going to bail out, and I couldn't get the canopy open. It was stuck. I put the nose down to look for a place to land and the engine started running again. I flew over to Guam.

We had submarines every 250 miles, I think. There were four submarines between the coast of Japan and Iwo. I was sitting up there and they were your navigational aid. I was real thrilled, you know. You're alone and you're watching your fuel. I found the first one. They called them Dumbo One, Two, Three and Four. I headed over Dumbo One and I called Dumbo Two. He answered me and told me to fly 179 degrees because it was about a 180 degree course south; you're going just about due south. I called him again and finally I said, "Dumbo Two, where are you located?" [laughter]

"You dummy," he said, "If you dip your wing a little, you'll look right at me." [laughter] He was right under me and I couldn't see him. He didn't like that very well.

I got home. I didn't bail out. When they flew that airplane, they tried to find what

was wrong with it. The engineering officer would fly it a lot. Each squadron had their own test pilot. He flew missions but he was a mechanic in civilian life. We never did take it on another mission, but we never did find anything wrong with it.

Did you fly a different airplane all the time, or did you always fly the same one?

Well, you had your airplane but another guy could use it. I had, I think it was, number sixteen or something up there in Aleutian Islands. You had your same crew chief all the time, too, and you became real buddies with your crew chief, real friends.

Crew chief's the guy that keeps the plane flying?

That's right. He's the one that makes sure it flies and those engines are working right. You know, I was always overly helpful to those people. If I got to Anchorage to get a little bit of whiskey, I was always made sure that most of the guys got their share of it, because they were your friends.

Did you carry any personal weapon? Did you have a pistol or anything. If you did get shot down, did you have any weapons at all?

Yes, I had a .45 that hadn't been cleaned since I got it and probably wouldn't have fired. You had one in the airplane, but I didn't carry it very often.

What other equipment did you have when you flew?

Well, in Iwo, flying out of the Pacific there, instead of the Bering Sea, you had a dingy for when you bailed. You'd get out of that parachute and pull that button dingy,

and a little raft would open up for you. It had supplies; a flashlight, and rockets that would shoot flares. But in Aleutians, we didn't have anything like that, because you only lived maybe twelve seconds in the water if you went in because of the temperature. We didn't carry anything.

There wasn't any point.

No.

If you crashed in the Aleutians, you died.

That was it. No way of getting another chance. I was coming off there one time and there was a kid from Los Angeles that flew my wing. He was fairly new, a really good pilot, and really, a nice fellow. He was on fire and he landed on what they called Rat Island. It was right off of Kiska. It was probably a quarter of a mile across and maybe three quarters of a mile long. He landed in the shallow water. He got out, and when I flew over him, he was walking towards the shore. The Navy Rescue TBY landed on the lee side of the island because of the waves. Those guys ran across there but when they got there he was already dead . . . just from that water.

What kind of gear did you wear?

Just a pair of coveralls, a warm flight jacket, and rubber flight boots that were lined, because they were comfortable. They were the thing to wear if you ever wanted to get your feet out. I mean, you'd get your feet out of them, it wouldn't hurt. They were kind of heavy, but they were comfortable, real comfortable.

You didn't have one of those electric suits that plugged in?

No, I didn't have anything like that.

Was it cold in the air?

Well, you had a little heater in the airplane. No, it wasn't cold, but you got to remember, we didn't fly high. Over in Europe it could have been cold when they were flying those P-38s or the 51s or 47s up twenty-five, thirty thousand feet. I think they were cold. They were dressed for it, but . . .

You stayed ten thousand feet or less?

We rarely saw ten thousand feet. We flew high at Iwo in 51s and weren't cold.

When you leave Iwo and you go out to Japan on a mission, when you fly over, at what altitude do you fly over Japan?

At whatever altitude the B-29 led you, but he'd usually fly around ten, twelve, fifteen thousand feet all the way there. We'd take off with seventy-five B-51s, and if you got sixty there, it was a pretty good day's work. Plenty of things happened, you know.

Seventy-five would take off and only sixty would make the target?

Things would happen. How would you like to be the head guy and have somebody call you and tell you their radio's dead they're going back. [laughter] Hell, that . . .

This was just before you got into the strafing missions or is this when you were escorting?

Whatever.

Whatever?

It's just, a lot of people weren't built for this, and things would go wrong with their airplanes.

The more missions that people were on the more apt they were to think . . .

A test pilot would fly the airplane when you'd get back and it would work fine. They just couldn't do it. I suppose that was true in the infantry and the field artillery, or whatever you were doing. If you weren't the type of person that could do that, you just . . .

You were a squadron commander. How many did you have in your squadron?

Twenty-five.

You had twenty-five. And you'd have . . .

. . . ten squadron commanders and one group commander.

You'd have the same problem. Out of your twenty-five . . .

Oh, yes.

Then the next mission you flew, was the guy OK and could fly?

I'll tell you a quick story and this will kind of change your attitude a little. We had a young kid out there and he was really a nice, nice guy. He was always going back with something wrong. The group commander called me up there one night and said, "What are we going to do about Smith?"

I said, "Well . . ."

He said, "I think I'll send him back to the States."

I said, "Well, don't do that. I'll talk to him."

He said, "OK. Report back."

I went down and said, "What the hell's wrong with you? You know there's nothing wrong with these airplanes."

He said, "I can't swim. I'm scared of the water."

I said, "Well, if you go down, you can get into that dingy . . ."

He said, "No, I'd panic."

I said, "No, you wouldn't. You'd be all right. This is the Navy." Like I knew what the hell I'm talking about. So I said, "I'll tell you what, tomorrow we'll go on a mission, unless you want to go back to the States. Would you rather go back to the States?"

He said, "No, I wouldn't want to go back to the States."

"We'll go on a mission tomorrow and you fly on my wing and you stay with me."

We had a nice mission. He stayed right there. He's a good flyer, a good pilot. We got within forty miles from Iwo and his engine failed and he bailed out. I dove down there and he was gone, never came up. Boy, I'll tell you, that really tore me up. I knew I had faith in the boy . . .

Engines failed and stuff happened?

[Or you ran] out of fuel. Those things happened quite often.

Out of Iwo, did any of your planes get shot down?

Oh, yes.

From your squadron?

On the Aleutians we lost some. We were all trained. The P-38 pilots that I was with,

before we left the States to go to the Aleutians, originally, we were pretty well trained and did a lot of single engine flying. I lost an engine once on take-off up at Adak. I'm just too late to land it. I'm in the Bering Sea, out twelve miles. You're well trained, it's automatic. You hit a button, the belly tanks fly off. You hit another button, and the prop stops and feathers. Then you try to turn it up, and you get some altitude, eventually, and just stay with it, and stay with it, and stay with it. The toughest part for me was to get my knees to quit shaking. [laughter] They would really get shaky. We did a lot of that type of training before we left, so we knew—or should have known—how to do it. We had a little better chance than the younger kids who were coming right out of flying school and being put in a war, you know.

One of the things, at least early in the war, is the best training seems to have been for the pilots. If anybody was trained and ready for combat, it was the pilots. They knew their airplanes.

I would say that.

But later on in the war, the last year or so, we got like the Japanese, we were rushing it too much and . . .

Yes. Running them through school too fast and not washing out the numbers that they did before, you know. They washed out a lot of kids.

I know a funny, cute story about a fellow from Reno that went in when I did. There were four of us from Nevada, and the rest were from Texas, in our class. This fellow's named Joe Kowsakowski. They brought him out here from Pittsburgh as a football player. He was in our class. He didn't like

to fly. He didn't know that when he got there. The class was divided; half of them would go to ground school and the other half would fly, and then switch around, you know. We had civilian instructors, and Joe and I had the same instructor. His name was O'Grady, a great Irish guy. I was sitting in the back of the classroom in the last row and I could see the guys from the flight line walk right by.

Here comes Joe Kowsakowski, "Bob! Bob! They washed me out! They washed me out!" Happy . . . oh, it was the greatest thing ever happened to him.

I asked O'Grady, "What happened to my friend Joe?"

He said, "Well, he got as far as the aerobatics and I took him up." You were in the back seat of these PT-13s and the instructor was in the front. You couldn't talk to him, but he could talk to you. I said, 'Mr. Kows,' (they called Joe Mr. Kows) 'would you like to do a slow roll?' This was the start of the aerobatics. So he did. I said, 'Would you like to do another one?' He said, 'No.'"

He didn't want to fly and they washed him out. He went to bombardier school. He was coming back in a B-17 on a mission over in England and landed that airplane. The pilot and co-pilot were killed. Joe crash-landed it and saved the rest of the crew. So it helped him.

It helped him, yes. I've heard other people say that they'd wash out as many as fifty percent of a class.

That would be about right.

So it was really difficult; the flight training, the physical training, and the testing; they really, really put you through the works.

That's right.

If you had to compare it to law school, was it as hard as law school?

Well, it's an attitude thing. I would say that the flight part of it was easier than law school, if you liked to fly. I mean, I never did get much thrill out of sitting for four or five hours in a library, reading books and studying. I did get a thrill out of flying an airplane. Once you got over the primary flying school, and you were soloing all the time and doing a lot of that type of thing, I think it was much easier than law school.

If you liked flying, it was fun.

Yes.

And some people just plain didn't like it.

I never understood why some people went in the Air Corps, as we called it then. I suppose they thought they'd like [to be a pilot]. I tried to get in the Navy Air Corps before I got in the Army Air Corps and that delayed me another six months because [I flunked the color blind test]. So, I went to the Army Air Corps.

You were on your way en route to Hawaii when the war actually ended. Then you flew back to Iwo and got your reprimand.

I got my official reprimand.

What did they do with you?

Well, this was kind of interesting. My last punishment was, he cut my orders to get on a boat to come home. So, I just hitchhiked home. Another fellow, named Kelly Singleton, got in the boat. He got home about twenty-nine days later. I got home in two days.

When you say hitchhike, you just went down to the airfield and asked who was going where?

Yes. "Where you going? Can I get a ride?"
"Sure."

Did they ask to see your orders, or didn't they care?

No, they didn't care.

Nobody cared where you were going. That was your problem.

That's right. I got a ride to Hawaii and then I got a plane from Hawaii. Some type of transport was coming to McCullan Field. It took me right home, practically. I got discharged at May Field. It was right in my back yard.

And they didn't care, when you got your discharge, how you got home. That didn't bother them?

They didn't know how I got there.

You said that you considered reenlisting, staying in, but your wife really wanted you to get out.

Right. So I got out. My brother and I, after he settled down from his excursion over there in Japan, we started spray painting. Spray painting was against the union rules then. There was no spray painting in Reno. We were hired by the chairman of the county commission to paint the race track. We had an ex-felon, who had been in the federal penitentiary, working for us. He was really the only one who knew anything about painting. But we learned and we bought equipment, and then some good stuff. We'd get out there and kick those machines on

at three o'clock in the morning. At daylight, seven probably—the head of the union then was Harry Depaoli—would come out there and shut us down. [laughter] This ex-felon, Earl was his name, almost got in a fight asking for his human rights in the United States of America. [laughter] He learned all that in prison, I guess.

So Harry went to my dad. They were friends. He said, "If you'll send those kids up to Lake Tahoe to paint, we won't bother them a bit. You can't do it here. You can't spray paint in this area."

My folks had a little old cabin up in Zephyr Cove. We got our wives and kids and we went up to Zephyr Cove and we painted and made some pretty good money. We charged seven cents a square foot. We painted the average house in probably thirty minutes. But at the end of summer, that was it, because in those days nobody ever lived at Lake Tahoe, nobody.

I figured I had better get smart and get something better. I didn't have a degree from college; I didn't have a science. I came up here and registered and got a year's credit in biology in one semester. It was hard. I did the whole year's work. Got the top grade in the class. Then I went to the U.S. Air Flight School.

Did you go on the G.I. Bill?

Yes, I went on the G.I. Bill, and I worked in the library.

You must have gotten out of the service in September or October of 1945?

What month did the war end?

August.

I got out in September.

You had been in for five years.

Yes. I got all my money together and when I came back from overseas I bought a 1941 Ford V-8. Everybody, I bet ninety-five percent of them, that graduated from flying school, when they got commissioned, bought a new car. They took it out of your allotment check for your wife . . . no payments . . . no cash down. You got paid for your accumulated leave when you get discharged. I had won a little bit in poker, and complied that. I paid \$1175 for a 1941 V-8, beautiful, blue convertible. We went to Mexico City, and Guadalajara, and drove around.

I came back and then went to law school. In order to go to law school, I sold it for, probably, \$600-\$700 to a fellow who was dealing at Harrah's. I got that money, then I got the G.I. Bill, and we had a little saved. I went to law school and did fine. I mean, I wasn't the head of the class, but I did good. I came back to Reno and went to work for Alan Bible as deputy attorney general for \$250 a month, commuting to Carson City and back.

Eventually, Alan didn't run, and he and I opened an office in the Gazette Building. After the first month, we started going over the phone bill, saying, who made that phone call and replying, I don't know. We had one girl trying to figure out long distance calls.

Alan said, "Why do we want to go through this. Why don't we just be partners? Then we won't have to worry about it."

I said, "OK."

So we were partners. Never got anything in writing. Never. Everyone knew we were partners, even after he was elected, until the American Bar suggested that wasn't proper. Anything that wasn't proper, Bible wouldn't be a party to doing it. We were partners for a long, long time. It did a little good for our firm.

About the fourth year of my practice, or it might have been later than that, I got to know a big car dealer down in San Leandro. I think I got to know him through Michael Callahan. Anyway, he found my Ford for me. [laughter] He and his wife brought it up to Reno for me and we went out to dinner. He paid six thousand dollars for it. I bought it from him. Well, he bought for the car for me, but he didn't add anything; I paid six thousand dollars.

I took it down to Harrah's, and the foreman says, "Well, what do you want me to do?"

I said, "Well, come here. This is the front and that's the back. You start there and do whatever you have to do to make it the same Ford I purchased originally, with the original color."

He looked it up in the magazines. Once in a while I'd go down there and check it. Once the fellow wasn't there anymore. He got fired. He didn't know what he was doing.

"We'll just have to start over again, Mr. McDonald."

After five months, maybe six months, I got my car. I had a bill for \$36,000 to rehab my car. And that car wasn't in that bad of shape. I still have it.

That car turned out to be a pretty expensive car for you.

Yes, it did.

So, for a 1941 Ford V-8, you spent more money for it than most people spend for a Mercedes.

Yes. Right. I never use it.

How many miles have you ever put on it?

Since I had it remodeled, probably three hundred.

You just keep it warehoused?

Yes. I thought about that Hot August Nights, but it's crowded, so I decided not to. I've never done anything with it.

Did you have any difficulty adjusting? You came home from the Aleutians and you could have stayed in the United States then.

Oh, I certainly could have.

But you went back. You came back when the war was over, and your inclination was to stay in and continue flying. Did you have a hard time settling down?

No, I don't recall having any problems. We were up at Lake Tahoe that summer and that was really a lot of fun. It was difficult for me, when I got into law school, to settle down. I mean, to really get into the proper habits. Taking biology, and I think I took journalism or something when I came to make up some credits here, that wasn't difficult. But law school was. They flunked out a lot of people in those days; some schools, certainly, still do. You had to get those proper habits and adhere by them. You had to do it like a religion; you study from seven to midnight, if that's what your schedule was, and do it every day. And you know, I did that. Finally, it worked out.

Why were you willing to do that much work? Up until that time, you hadn't been very serious, more of a Good Time Charley. Why did you work that hard?

I don't know. I never could figure that out. No one talked me into going to law school. My dad used to say, when we were growing up, that he'd always wanted to be a lawyer

but he never had the money to go to school. He already had children when he graduated as an engineer. That might have given me an inclination to go to law school. A lot of my friends that I went to Santa Clara with, were at U.S.F. Law School. They were all trained a little differently in school than I was. They were in tough Catholic schools in high school and knew how to study, which was something that everybody should learn. I suppose I knew they were there, and I knew they were getting by, and they liked it. So that probably had something to do with it. But I wasn't big on being a lawyer.

A lot of young men from this area came back and went to law school. I don't know how many attorneys there were in Reno in 1949 or 1950.

There weren't a lot.

But a significant percentage of them came back from the war, and went to law school.

I could name you a lot of them, because they're my age. They started when I did. They went to Hastings, U.S.F. There were a lot of them, you're right.

Why do you suppose that was? Was there something in the air?

I don't know.

Because if you think about them, there was a lot of difference in who they were before the war; Pete Echeverria, Jack Streeter, or you, or Cliff Young. It's not like you were all friends or came from exactly the same background.

No.

All of you were very different.

Yes. I ran into Pete Echeverria when I was on my rest leave over in Hawaii. He told me then he was going to try to get into Stanford Law School. That might have done something, there.

He was in the hospital. He was recovering from . . .

He was fine then. He had been hurt in the Philippines.

Nevada was a very small state; Reno was a very small place; but yet you guys ran into each other all over the place.

The only time I ever really felt homesick is out on Iwo. There were still a lot of Japanese out there in those caves. They didn't disturb me much, but they were there, and we knew they were there. You just didn't drive up into the island. The general had an airplane up on the back of Mount Suribachi, a brand new B-51. We were short on airplanes. No one wanted to go up and ask him for it. Iwo had just been taken, and hadn't been too firmed up, yet.

I said, "I'll ask him."

I got in a jeep and drove. I got right to the head of the Sarabachi, that's where the road went around it, and there was a big sign up there: "When in Reno, visit Harold's Club." [laughter]

Did you get the airplane?

No. It was a case of, if the Japanese come back . . . Things like that kind of made you want to go to law school. [laughter] But I met some great people in the service. I still have a lot of good friends. My old roommate . . . or tent mate in Iwo, he turned out to be a real top flight brain surgeon in Washington, D.C.

Your generation seems to have had some very successful people. Do you think the war was an influence?

Sure.

Do you think that the Depression made for stronger people, or the war made for stronger people?

Combination of all of them.

Combination?

Absolutely. It matured you fast. I can tell this from my own family.

You don't stand around with your hand out saying you're supposed to give this to us. You went out and tried to find a way to earn it.

That's right. I used to tell my kids—they believe me now, probably—that I was selling *Nevada State Journals* when I was ten years old in downtown Reno. My dad would go to work on the *Journal* early, you know. I'd go down with him. That's when I told you I sold papers and just did all kinds of things to make money, you know. They'd laugh and say, "Oh, you didn't do that." But we did do that. I think that the war came along, we got in the service, and matured awfully fast. I know I did. It's kind of a different outlook—you didn't expect to be taken care of everywhere you go.

You were only twenty-five years old when you went to law school?

Yes, about that.

I would guess you started practice in 1949 or 1950?

As soon as I got out.

You were still a pretty young man, only thirty years old.

Yes.

I wonder if you have anything else that you'd like to say, specifically, about your experiences.

I'll tell you one interesting story about my brother. When my brother came back on the boat from being in prison camp, he was going to land at San Francisco. My mother and dad didn't want me to go down there and meet him. "You stay home." I was living with them then. I didn't have my own place to live. "We'll go get him. That way, he'll come back the same day we get there." [laughter]

They thought you'd go out on the town. [laughter]

I knew what they were talking about, so I stayed home. We went out the next day. And I told you they had the funeral for him up in the cathedral. And he wasn't Catholic, either. We wound up in Carson, among other places. When we got into Carson, we go into the Senator Bar and big old Ken Johnson is tending bar back there. Ken Johnson was a good friend of ours.

"McDonald," he says, "You son of a bitch, you owe me ten dollars for flowers." [laughter] Ken had gone to his funeral.

He had taken flowers too, right?

Yes. I was glad to get back from the war and get back to the United States when I did. I've been married to the same girl, for, I don't know, fifty-three or fifty-four years, I guess.

Well, you've been in love longer than that. You started going with her when you were in the ninth grade. That's a long . . .

Yes. But I didn't marry her then.

That's a very long relationship.

Yes, it is.

How many children do you have?

Four.

Four. Did any of your children go into law?

No.

They knew about law and you knew about newspapers; they didn't want to be in either.

Probably.

Were any of them interested in journalism?

None. One is married to a commercial fisherman in Alaska, and they have three kids, two are twins. We go fishing in Alaska. Another one lives in Bainbridge Island up in Seattle. She's married to an architect and they have twins and a boy, Timmy. Well, the oldest one lives in Montana. They have a little restaurant and a bar up there, and a fly fishing line. And Tim lives here and he has two children. He's in the land developing business and I'm kind of in that with him, but I'm still practicing law.

Unusual, to have that many children move to someplace else.

Yes, it is. It really is. I don't know how the girls ever got there. They met their

husbands up at Oregon State. They all get along good . . . everything's working. So that's about it.

Are you still friends with anybody you met in the service?

John Singleton, from New Mexico. He's in Utah, that little town down on the Nevada border where the gaming is.

Mesquite.

Yes. He's on the Utah side there. He's a good friend and I hear from him all the time. Guys are spread around the country. We have an Air Force reunion up in Seattle at the end of September; I had some fellow call me. I want to make sure I'll be there. I told them I was still thinking about them.

Have you ever been to one before?

Well, I put one on here, once, and then I went to one in Colorado Springs.

What's it like to go to one?

It's really good fun when it's organized right. This Reno one was well organized because I hired two girls that are in that business to organize it. I couldn't have done it.

I was telling Pat Brady about all my problems and he said, "You know so-and-so, and so-and-so? That's what they do for a living."

I was on the air race board then, and it was during the air races, so I got plenty of tickets. Of course, they were all pilots and crew chiefs and that was a big thing. Nevada and I had something to offer.

Absolutely come out for the air races.

Yes, so it fit in good. I worked hard. I wanted to make sure it was right. It was really successful.

Did you ever want to do that . . . fly in the air races? Did you ever want to fly like that again?

I don't think so. I used to get real itchy when what's-his-name would bring that P-38 in there. I used to go to them, then. That was kind of fun watching Gardner . . . that's his name.

Lefty Gardner, yes.

Yes. Lefty. I got to know him well. He hired me as a lawyer, but I never sent him the bill. We tried to get that airplane into a trust for him, and we never did get it done. I don't know what happened. He's in Texas. He's a good little guy. He was a bomber pilot in the war. I always thought he was a fighter pilot until I got to really know him. He's a good guy.

ERNEST W. MACK, M.D.

Ken Adams: Begin with a general background; maybe start with your grandfather.

Ernest W. Mack: My grandfather was a district attorney in Virginia City in 1892. Sometime in the nineties—I can't remember exactly when—he was a regent of the University of Nevada. My father, Ernest D. Mack, was a graduate of the University of Nevada, as was I. My two daughters attended the University of Nevada and graduated. Of my two granddaughters, one has already graduated and the other granddaughter is a senior at the University of Nevada.

Where were you born and when were you born?

I was born in Reno on May 25, 1913. I was born in my grandfather's home which was a beautiful, big house which sat on the corner of Island Avenue and Rainbow. There has been a motel there since my grandmother sold the house in 1934. That house had been moved from Virginia City to Reno, down the old Geiger Grade, by wagons dragging

logs behind for brakes. It was remarkable. It was a sixteen room, very lovely house. It had been put together by expert carpenters. You couldn't even see the seams where they had broken the house up into sections to bring it down.

Where were you raised?

I spent my life in Reno.

Where did your parents live?

We lived, first, in Burk's addition, which is out near the veteran's hospital. That was the outskirts of Reno at that time. Then we had a home on First Street, which is right down by the river. In later years, we lived in the southwest section of Reno.

What did your father do?

My father graduated as an electrical engineer from the University of Nevada. As a matter of fact, he wanted to be a lawyer,

but my powerful grandfather, who made all the decisions in his house, elected to have him be an engineer. So he became an electrical engineer. He did a couple of years of postgraduate work at Western Electric, Schenectady, N.Y., where they tested the famous Mallet locomotives that were the big engines that we later used in the mountains here in the winter. A little later on in life he went into the automobile business, and then later was in the radio business. Eventually, at the end of his life, he was a photographer.

You went to school in Reno?

Yes. I went to McKinley Park School, Reno Jr. High School, Reno High School in the old school, and to the University of Nevada.

What year did you graduate from Reno High School?

I think it was '31. I left the University of Nevada in '34 at the end of my third year and went to medical school, but graduated with my class in '35, having completed a year at medical school.

Where did you go to medical school?

McGill University of Montreal.

You were there two years?

No, I was there five years. After I graduated from McGill University, I went on to Baltimore, where I did postgraduate training in surgery, and eventually on to Boston, continuing my training in neurosurgery, which is brain surgery.

Was your grandfather influential in . . . ?

No, he was dead. He died while I was still a small child.

You weren't like your father, you got to make your own choices?

I'm sure I had a hand in it. My mother, who was a trained nurse, directed me into medicine at an early age . . . influenced me tremendously.

When did you start to practice?

Actually, I came back to Reno to practice in 1948, I guess. After World War II I taught at the University of California for a year, just to get back into medicine and to make connections with the university. I was teaching on the Berkeley campus and had a small neurosurgical practice in Berkeley, but moved up here for permanent location.

I don't understand the sequence of things.

After I graduated from McGill University, I went to Baltimore into a residency program in surgery; this was all postgraduate work. The year before, at McGill, was the equivalent of a year's internship. As a matter of fact, while I was still in Baltimore, I had volunteered to go with the Canadians to Europe. Canada had gone to war, and I had written to Dr. Wilder Penfield at the Montreal Neurological Institute, offering my services. He had written me back that they would keep me in mind. As a result of that, I went back to Montreal as a resident at the Montreal Neurological Institute. They were short-handed and it was a great opportunity for me. So I finished my training there.

Then World War II commenced. Like everybody at this moment in time I can remember it so well because of its particular

significance. I was driving up the Charles River, listening to the Boston Symphony, on December 7, 1941. Breaking into the Boston Symphony program were these announcements . . . so I finally listened to the announcements and realized we had gone to war. All the years I was in the east, I kept telling those people we would eventually go to war with Japan. That's the way we thought out here; but they didn't think that way back there. As soon as Pearl Harbor was over, then I had the urge to be in the armed forces.

When did you actually go into the service?

I entered the service in May of 1942. I was working at the Lahey Clinic at that time as a fellow, which is an advanced residency, and finishing in neurosurgery, really. Frank Lahey, director of the Lahey Clinic, was in the office of the surgeon general at that time, working on medical manpower. As a result of that, people at the Lahey Clinic were not going to war; he was maintaining his staff. So I had a very difficult time. I was turned down by the Air Force, turned down by the Army, turned down by the Navy . . . all because of this.

Then I got a telegram from this group of residents with whom I had spent two years at Baltimore. The telegram said, "Have no fear mother, for we are all together." Well, I got on the telephone and called them. They were making a hospital at the University of Maryland, and all my friends were in it. My name had been presented as neurosurgeon to this outfit. The commanding officer of the outfit was a famous physician and war hero named Maurice Pincoffs. He was a professor of medicine at the University of Maryland, and had been the most decorated medical officer in World War I. After I talked to him on the telephone, I got permission to leave the clinic for a day. In those days, we didn't fly much,

so I took the Pennsylvania Railroad down to Baltimore from Boston. You remember the Pennsylvania Railroad? It was a marvelous railroad . . . not very expensive . . . very fast. I had an interview with Dr. Pincoffs and the other people at the University, some of whom had been my peers in training. I came out of there having signed the papers to join the U.S. Army, and be neurosurgeon at the 42nd General Hospital, which is the affiliated unit of the University of Maryland. During the war, I was carried as a professor at the University of Maryland, serving in their unit overseas.

You were already doctors and it's a medical unit. Did they send you to military training, too?

This all moved very quickly. I signed up in Baltimore. I didn't even have the money to buy a uniform because residents didn't make much money in those days. One of my peers had been a wonderful guy from Baltimore named Walter Graham. He was a splendid surgeon, who was always there for us when we were trying to learn surgery, to help us. We all looked on him as a great figure. He also was a very wealthy man. I called Walter, whom we all called the "King Fish", and told him I was in the 42nd General Hospital, but I didn't have enough money to buy a uniform.

He said, "Well, go down to (the famous men's store in Baltimore) and get a uniform and charge it to me and you can pay me after the war."

That was exactly what I did. After the war, I went back to Baltimore and visited with him and paid him.

Within a week after I had left Baltimore, I received orders to go to Battle Creek to join the unit for training. Immediately, they put us into training, which consisted of backpacks and marching and walking miles and miles.

As you can imagine, we had a terrible time—a bunch of people that hadn't been that active.

You had been in advanced studies for twelve years?

That's right. For most of these people it was the same thing. It was a trying period. When we got to Battle Creek, there were a number of medical units there and we all looked around and talked to them. Some of them had been there a couple of months. So we figured we had a couple of months. We were there one week, got orders to leave, got on the train, and went to San Francisco. We were put in the Cow Palace with a huge number of medical units. Again, we thought, because some of them had been there for a long time, that we'd be there for a while and the training would continue with marching up and down the hills in San Francisco with a full pack and so forth. No medical training, because that we all had. Exactly a week later, we were aboard the *USS America*. In the course of this week, we had been reequipped with winter equipment. We thought we were going to the Aleutians or to Alaska; there was a war going on there at that time if you remember. Actually, after clearing the Golden Gate, within a day or two we realized we were heading in a southwest direction and probably for Australia. Well, we eventually landed in Melbourne, Australia. It was winter down there. It isn't cold in Melbourne; it rains a lot. It's damp as hell. So we were glad to have winter equipment.

You were a first lieutenant? A second lieutenant?

First lieutenant.

You were commissioned directly to first lieutenant.

That's right.

You probably didn't even know the differences between the ranks.

I did, because I had been through some ROTC. As a matter of fact, early on I was given command of a platoon of enlisted men because I was one of the few doctors who had ever had any ROTC training. I had been an officer in the ROTC at Reno High School.

The first real contact in the Army that was meaningful, was when I got to Battle Creek I was introduced to a Captain Ed Stridel. He was a medical administrative officer assigned to the 42nd General Hospital. Now, Stridel had been a peace time medical administrative soldier in the rank of master sergeant. With the war, he had been brought up to the rank of captain and assigned to the 42nd General Hospital. He was wonderful because he knew the Army and he immediately got us all some paychecks, which we needed, and gave us the routine of living in the Army, and did a pretty good job of it.

Before we left the Cow Palace, they had entertainment one night. Janet McDonald was the star of the entertainment. I remember it very well because there was a delightful lieutenant who ran the show and emceed it. He was an absolutely charming guy. I met him and talked to him and he was just pleasant as could be. It was Ronald Reagan. [laughter] Isn't that interesting? He was a lieutenant in the Army at that point.

Well, we spent one night in New Zealand and then went on to Melbourne, where we landed. We were in Melbourne for about two months, during which time we built our camp on a golf course. Then we were moved by train up to Brisbane. That's where our hospital was first located. Brisbane was a moderate sized Australian town on the northeast coast of

Australia, subtropical in climate, and not too important a city until this moment in time. It became MacArthur's headquarters, which made it a very important city. Our hospital was assigned to serve MacArthur as well as to take care of the sick and wounded that were brought down from the advanced areas.

We first converted a lovely sacred heart convent called the Stuart Home, which is in Brisbane, into a hospital. It was a very lovely place about three stories high and surrounded with beautiful grounds. We put on additional units, built by the Army engineers, to house officers, enlisted men, and the nurses. In just about a month we converted that into a hospital, and commenced immediately to receive casualties from New Guinea.

How many people were in your unit?

Oh, officers and nurses probably constituted about 150. And then we probably had about 150 enlisted men assigned to us.

What specialties did you have in terms of the doctors?

General Hospital had all specialties covered. Most of the men had been professors at the University of Maryland or at Johns Hopkins. I was one of two neurosurgeons in Australia at that time. The other one was Charlie Elkins, who was with the unit that was down in Melbourne. He became sick that year and was sent home. So the next year, I was the only neurosurgeon that the U.S. Army had in Australia. The country is bigger than the United States. I flew to a lot of other hospitals when they needed specialty work from a neurosurgeon.

So you started to receive patients you said from . . . ?

When we got there, there was just the Air Corps and the Medical Corps in Australia. A lot of the Air Corps had come down from the Philippines; they had been in to get a few airplanes and fly out before the fall of the Philippines. Then they brought in some more Air Corps. They were trying to hold the Japs at bay with air strikes. The Japs had landed on New Guinea, which is just north of Australia. They're fighting the Australians at that point. The Australians were very short of manpower, because most of the able-bodied men in Australia were in the far east. About that time, they moved the first American division into Australia, which was a division of National Guard origin from the west coast. It was not too well trained, nor did they have the time to give them much training. They threw them into the war against the Japs up there on the mountains of New Guinea, which was a terrible jungle area. They slowed down the Japs at the point where the Japs got within sight of Port Moresby, which, had they taken it, they would have penetrated Australia. However, they were stopped and driven back across the mountains by the Americans and the Australians.

So we were, for the moment, in Australia with the Japs being cut off in New Guinea. We had set up our hospital and the first casualties were brought down either by boat or by airplane. The DC-3, which was the airplane of the time, had two twin engines and was a very sturdy airplane. They flew a lot of the wounded in on DC-3 ambulance planes. The other way was they were brought down by ship. Our first casualties came from New Guinea. Then we started getting some from Guadalcanal. When they finally evacuated the marines out of Guadalcanal, they all came into Brisbane. This was a tremendous experience because they all immediately came down with malaria. The soldiers had stopped taking

Atabrine, [their medication for malaria]. At one time we had twenty or thirty ambulances lined up just holding people coming in with malaria, all marines.

As a neurosurgeon, it would seem to me that the majority of cases were not something that required your specialty. Did you assist others?

Well, sure, I assisted other surgeons in surgery. However, there were a large number of neurosurgical casualties. They consisted of three areas: injuries to the peripheral nerve, particularly around the shoulders and in the groin area, which would cause partial paralysis of the limb; injuries to the spine, which would cause complete paralysis of legs or arms or both; or injuries to the brain . . . where the brain was penetrated. We had about five hundred beds at the Stuart Home at the 42nd General, and I had about fifty beds and they were usually pretty full.

That's ten percent of the . . .

Yes. It was a busy load and we worked hard. Now at that point in time, you see, evacuation was pretty slow. It wasn't like it became later. We would receive a number of casualties and be busy for a short time. Then we'd have periods where we wouldn't be busy. At those times, I would consult with other hospitals or fly out and do cases on the outskirts.

I can remember one particular incident which, at this time, I wouldn't have the courage to do what I did then. I was still a lieutenant. We were sent up to a town in Australia called Charters Towers. There was an American division up there in training to go into the war. One of the soldiers working under live ammunition in the field had raised up and got wounded in the spine. He

was partially paralyzed and they sent me up [there to see him]. I got there, reviewed the case, went over the x-rays and examined the patient. There was a colonel in charge who was a strong-minded man. I looked at everything and said to him, "In my opinion, this bullet is lying both in and out of the spinal canal, which is losing spinal fluid." This was a very dangerous thing because these things would get infected and then you'd have a meningitis, which could be deadly. I said, "I'm going to operate on this boy. I can't do much where the damage has occurred, but I'll get that fragment out and close the door and stop this leaking and that meningitis."

The colonel said, "I've looked at the x-rays and I don't think that bullet's in there. Where do you think it is?" He was a colonel and I was a lieutenant.

I said, "Well, I'm the consultant in this case and I'm going to operate on this patient immediately and I want you to stand right behind me so you can see what we find."

Holding my breath as I proceeded, I was very happy when I uncovered the spine and there was a fragment lying both in the spinal canal and outside it, which I carefully removed. There were no more remarks from the colonel.

After I had been out there about a year and a half or maybe a little longer, I became part of a surgical team. My surgical team consisted of me, an orthopedist, Colonel Henry Ullrich, who was professor of orthopedics at the University of Maryland, and nine well-trained enlisted men. We were sent into advanced units just like MASH units. What you know as a MASH unit didn't exist then—they were small physician hospitals.

We flew from Australia to the Philippines to a place called Biak. We spent the night there and then went eventually to Tacloban, which was the first landing spot on the return

to the Philippines where MacArthur made his famous statement: "I have returned". We landed there and then the next day we were transferred to Manila during the battle of Manila. We landed in a DC-3 out on Quezon Boulevard, a big boulevard east of the city of Manila. It's a boulevard that has high and low spots so we hit a couple of high spots and finally settled down on the main highway. The battle was going on and as I got out of the airplane a MP came running up to me and he said, "Where's your helmet and gun?"

I said, "I'm a medical officer. I don't have either one."

He said, "Well, if you don't get a helmet, you're going to be a dead medical officer pretty quick."

I got a helmet very quickly, and then shortly thereafter, I got a .45 as well. That was the first time I was armed.

Our surgical team was sent to a little place called Dau, which was north of Manila just off Clark Field on Zambale Mountain, or just west of there. The Japs were up in those mountains in pretty heavy concentration. They had a lot of artillery. They would run it out at night and just make a mess of Clark Field and what was down there. Then they'd go back into the caves. They had to be dug out of there cave by cave. The casualty rate was tremendous.

So we were sent there and we went to work. What you saw in the MASH units is just exactly what we went through. We worked our butts off every night. They'd start bringing the casualties in about five o'clock. They'd go through triage and be put in line . . .

Did the triage process of prioritization . . . ?

This is about the first time it really was developed well. We had special doctors, particularly anesthesiologists, who assisted

the surgeons [and would determine] how much damage [there was] and how soon each casualty had to be taken care of. We had to have teams with several operating tables going at a time. We would work all night. Then, in the morning, we had to change the dressings and move that batch back to Manila General Hospital, and get ready for a new batch. Every night at five o'clock, they'd start arriving. They'd fight all day and then bring the casualties out in the evening.

That brings me to two major things. One was having penicillin . . . not only having it, but having it in large amounts. It had just appeared at the onset of World War II. So we had penicillin to use, and lots of it. And second, we had transfusions. The Red Cross did an absolutely fabulous job of not only getting the blood, but putting it together so it could be transported by air to Australia and distributed to these units in Australia, New Guinea, and on through the Philippines. It was a marvelous program because it not only procured the blood from donor's but carefully arranged for it's preservation and packaged it so carefully that they could ship it into the tropics and maintain it. It was a marvelous job. It saved so many lives it's unbelievable. And so we had an unlimited amount of blood. You could take a soldier who had fought all day, and probably had no fluids and nothing to eat, and was wounded and bled a lot, who had been dragged out of there and brought to the hospital in a terrible condition, after being subjected to all this, and do whatever was necessary at the moment in the way of traumatic surgery, transfusion and hydration. These characters the next morning would look like At any rate, we continued there until we finished that battle . . . it was a tough go.

How long were you there? Do you know?

Yes. We were there, roughly, about six weeks. During that time, I also discovered something, which you saw on “MASH” on T.V. in sketches, about the quality of surgeons. There were excellent surgeons and there were terrible surgeons that were mixed up in this group. A lot of people got dragged into the Army and probably got misclassified in the early days. There were, sometimes, doctors with little or no experience who were labeled as surgeons. We had some of them. They were terrible surgeons. I and Dr. Ullrich, we wouldn’t want certain surgeons to operate unless we allowed it. We’d refuse them cases, first, or stop them operating if we thought it was beyond [their skill]. That [type of situation] got cleaned up considerably later on, but unfortunately, that was true in the early stages.

Six weeks was a very long time because you were operating virtually every evening.

Every night.

For eight or ten hours?

Yes.

There has to be some emotional baggage with that many wounded people.

The worst problem I had was seeing the types of individuals I was working on. For example, I spent hours putting back together what’s called the brachial plexus, which is a group of nerves in the shoulder which control movements to the hand and the arm, on a man who was a concert pianist. He would never play the piano again. By the same token, here would come somebody who had virtually nothing to offer and he would survive the most horrendous thing you could imagine and come out relatively unscathed.

At the end of about six weeks, you might say we were partially exhausted. But we got moved to another unit, attached to the First Cavalry Division, which was driving south from Manila. We first set up our hospital in a town south of Manila called Calamba. We had a few casualties there from the battle—but not too many. We weren’t working too hard there, actually. The Japs were retreating and we were not having many losses. When we were in that little town [we noticed] there were no men in that town. Before the Japs retreated, they rounded up all the males in the village, put them in a big building that had been a sugar mill, burned it, and killed everybody that tried to get out. There were no males left in that village.

Well, we had a short stay there and not too much work. Then we went on south to a place called Calauag, which is way down in the southern part of Luzon, the big island in the Philippines. Intelligence said we were scheduled for a big battle there. But when we got there, the Japs all had been evacuated and we didn’t have a big battle. The heavy fighting was over in the Philippines at that point. I was transferred out of my surgical team to a General Hospital in Manila, the Cornell Medical Center Unit, and became a neurosurgeon there. They didn’t have a neurosurgeon. I worked there in that General Hospital in Manila for the rest of the war.

Let’s do a little chronology here. When you went to Australia, it must have been June or July?

Still in May. In one month I went from being a resident to chief of neurosurgery in Australia.

In May you went to Australia and you were there until . . . ?

I was in Australia three years and then the last six months was spent in the Philippines.

Do you remember what month you went to the Philippines?

Yes, it would probably be in either January or February of '45.

In the Philippines, during the most intense part, how many people do you suppose you operated on a day? Would you have any idea?

Oh, I would say, considering the amount of time it takes you to do a case, four or five cases every night. You worked so hard that you fought to get a few hours of sleep and rest in between times. We had no nurses. It was, "Do your job. Get them ready to move. Get ready for the next batch." We treated Japanese casualties as well as Americans. We moved them back to a prison hospital which had been set up in Manila.

Was it difficult to treat Japanese?

Not really. You know, your training is such that you're going to treat the sick and wounded regardless of who they were or what they are.

Did you feel anger towards the Japanese?

Oh, yes. I hated the Japs, but I worked on them.

I'll tell you an interesting story about one. One night, they brought in a Japanese flying officer with a fragment in his brain. It was one which didn't interfere with his ability to comprehend or to talk, I was sure, but he wouldn't open his mouth for us. He wasn't paralyzed. We operated on him that night and took the fragment out. Closed it up and did

very well. He hadn't said one word. The next day, when the GI's who were the paramedics came in to put him on a litter and put him in an ambulance to move him back to a prison hospital, in very perfect English, he said to these boys, "Handle this litter gently."

Would you describe the process from the time the soldiers are injured?

They're injured in a battle situation and it takes hours to get them out. A medic treats them, gives them morphine, and if they've got fractured limbs, tries to put some kind of immobilization on . . . tie limbs of trees or something on to hold it still. They get moved back to where they could be put in either ambulances or planes. We didn't have helicopters then. Most of them were moved by ambulance to the first line, which would be the equivalent of a MASH unit, which was a station hospital. They would be given immediate care there; their wounds treated and cleaned up as much as possible. If they were awfully dirty, they had to be left open because we're in a subtropical environment with an awful lot of infection every place. What had to be done initially would be done and then they would go back to the next line of evacuation, which was the General Hospital in Manila. They would undergo further treatment, again usually trying to clean up dirty wounds. At that point, they would be evacuated to the United States for final treatment. When they did recover readily from their initial wounds, they'd come back, be reassigned, and be back in combat in six weeks or two months. A lot of them were being treated by us for their third or fourth wound.

I'll tell you a little interesting side story about fragments from explosives. Shrapnel is usually multi-sided. It's never something

you can grasp readily; particularly around the brain wounds because the consistency of brain is like cold butter. You've got to get it out of there if you can, because if you don't, it's going to form an abscess that will probably kill your patient. Trying to grasp these fragments with something that had two blades was very difficult at times. They would slip away from you, and if you weren't careful, you'd be pushing them further into the brain, causing more damage.

We had a Seabee outfit set up not too far away from where we were in the Philippines. I went over to this unit and told them about my problem. The Seabee's had a sign out there that said: "The difficult we'll do now, the impossible will take until tomorrow."

I told them what my problem was and they said, "Come back tomorrow."

I came back the next day and they had designed an instrument, made of materials that could be sterilized, with a pistol-like grip on it for two fingers and a thumb. When you depressed the thumb, out the other end of this slender tube would come three fingers that were like claws. Those three fingers could grasp any kind of a rounded or irregular object. As you relieved the pressure, you see, they'd close down on it. It was a marvelous thing. I used it all through the war.

Would you have been as good in your profession without the war?

It gave me a tremendous experience. Only, war surgery is trauma surgery and it's not that difficult. It's not like taking out brain tumors and things like that. Those are the things that I had to get myself back into after I came out of the Army.

But my war experience was a tremendous experience. The entire country was dedicated to one thing: to win the war. I had come

back from the Philippines and was in California when the Japs surrendered. I was down at Camp Beal in California waiting for assignment. I heard everybody driving cars and blowing horns, which meant that it was the end of the war. I stood there in the doorway of this place and I thought to myself "For three and a half years I really haven't thought about anything but winning that war. I haven't even thought about what I would do after the war."

So then I had to take stock. I went down and got myself a job at the University of California and taught for a while. I got back into going to conferences and watching other people do surgery, and helping them. Then I was ready to go again myself with this group up here in Reno.

Is that kind of the way it was . . . everybody needed to cope with the war just one day at a time?

That's right. It was a universal thing at that time. I remember the people in the war felt the same way. Everybody sacrificed. This nation had one goal in mind. It really was a remarkable time.

What would have the war been like without the blood supply, and without penicillin?

Oh, God, it would have been terrible. Dealing with that kind of infection, and even with all those things, we had cases that were very difficult to control. Some were almost out of hand. Some did get out of hand. You lost cases, you know. You'd get bloodstream infections that would enter the heart and destroy the patient. But we had good results. Our statistics were much better than World War I, which they did without penicillin.

What was the most serious weapons for the type of wounds that they inflicted?

I think probably grenades and cannon fire produced the worst kind of wounds. Bullet wounds weren't that bad if they didn't hit the brain. They'd go through and they'd damage some structures, but you could handle that. But sometimes, you know, massive damage to the brain would just overcome the patients.

Did you see a lot of bayonet wounds?

No, not many in the Pacific. There was very little of that kind of in-fighting. Most of the fighting was done with weapons at some distance. There was very little hand fighting.

I heard a number of stories about Japanese swords.

All the Japanese officers carried swords. In fact, I have one that I brought home from the Philippines. I got it from one of my patients. He had a couple of them that he had acquired and he gave me one. They're huge swords. These Japs used them if they got close. But you know, you didn't get that close to the enemy as a rule.

My closest approximation to a Jap occurred when I was in Manila ready to come home. I was waiting in a transit camp to get an airplane. I would go and visit other hospitals and check their equipment and their staff and the work they were doing because I was one of the senior neurosurgeons out there. I'm in this transit camp and, typical of the Army, in line waiting for a meal with a mess kit. We were all standing in line. All of a sudden: "Bang!" goes a M1 rifle. We had guards all around this camp because the Philippines was still full of Japs that were loose. One of these buggers had been hiding out. He got himself all covered

with hand grenades and he was making a run for us. He was going to blow up the whole bunch of us. One of the guards—these were all combat soldiers—picked him off and he nailed him.

What rank were you when you retired?

Major.

Rank wasn't a big issue to you?

No, I could have been a colonel if I had wanted to stay in the Army and go to Japan, but I decided I didn't want to.

They promoted you regularly as you went along?

Not regularly. I was a captain for a year, which wrinkled me plenty because I was the chief neurosurgeon in Australia and I didn't have the rank that I deserved. But I was young. That was one of the problems. I wasn't old enough to be higher in rank. Within a year after I was a captain, I was a major. And from there on it was easy.

When I got relieved at Manila and was ready to come home, my hospital, which had been moved from Brisbane up to Manila at that point, was scheduled to go to the invasion in Japan. And Colonel Yeagar, who was then our commanding officer (he had succeeded Pincoffs) said to me, "If you want to stay with us and go into Japan, I'll make you a colonel."

I said, "Well, I appreciate it, but I've been here three and a half years."

By that time the war was over in Europe and lots of neurosurgeons were arriving from there. I had the option to come home and I decided it was time to come home. My normal weight in life was about 220 pounds. At that point in time, I weighed 160 pounds.

I was covered with dermatitis from one end to the other. I had had a couple of bouts of malaria. And you always had diarrhea out there. It's just from living in an environment that's foreign to you.

The Filipinos were wonderful people. The women would come and gather our laundry every morning. They'd take your laundry and it would come back and it would just be beautiful . . . washed and pressed just immaculately. Well, when you put it on, within about thirty seconds, you'd smell like a water buffalo. They'd take the laundry down to the river and wash it in the river where the water buffalos were. And the result was not only did you smell like a buffalo, but you got dermatitis all over your skin.

You said when the soldiers came back from New Guinea, they stopped taking their malaria medicine and they came down with malaria.

Yes. Actually, malaria doesn't come back much in this kind of a climate, but if you're dealing with the tropics, it can come back again.

You had a whole unit with ambulances lined up with people with malaria.

Oh, that was the Marines coming out of Guadalcanal. You see, that was early in the war and they were using quinine . . . that was even before Atabrine. The marines had stopped taking their quinine as soon as they got off Guadalcanal and they all got sick as hell. It was bad.

I'll tell you an interesting story about that. I was up with this unit near Clark Field, and the man who ran the pathology part of the hospital asked me to come down and meet this Filipino. I went into the lab and here was a Filipino washing dishes. He introduced

me to him, and he was a Filipino doctor. He said, "He not only is a doctor, but this is the man who received the British Empire Medal for finding what's called the extra erythrocytic schizont." This refers to a stage in the development of malaria where it lives within red blood cells in the body, and can live there for a long time before it breaks out into recurring attacks. But because he was a Filipino, he couldn't work in the U.S. Army.

He was washing dishes?

Well, the poor bastard couldn't make a living, otherwise. He couldn't do anything. This was war out there and it was terrible. But there at least he was in his own environment, and I'm sure that when nobody was around, he was looking at slides and pathology apparatus. Isn't that interesting, though?

Certainly is.

Bureaucracy was even there . . .

Did you see black soldiers?

Oh, yes. In Australia, we had a lot of colored soldiers. This was something I really never understood because, you know, Australia is a white country and yet we moved a lot of colored troops down there. That caused a lot of trouble, too. But the Australians handled it.

Australia was a more segregated society than our society?

It's a very democratic society, but the only blacks in Australia were the aborigines. They're up in the very far north of Australia, so you didn't see any colored people until we got there and the colored troops moved in to

Brisbane in large numbers. All the Australian troops are out in the far east. A lot of the time there were incidents of colored soldiers living in Australian's homes. When they brought the Ninth Australian Division back from the far east to Australia This was some body of men. They had been at war for a couple of years and were seasoned soldiers, tough men. They were beautiful troops. When they came home, they brought their guns with them. One of these characters came back, walked into his house, and here was a colored guy with his wife. He just took his rifle and bashed this colored guy's head right in, right there. They brought him into my hospital. We elevated the depressed skull fracture and cleaned him up. The injury took away his speech for a while. When he started to speak again the first thing he said was: "Goodo," which is an Australian expression. He didn't come back with some American or southern expression, it was "Goodo." That was the first thing he said for a long time.

Were you treated well by the Australians?

Oh, marvelously, yes. They are great people and they were wonderful to us. They really were. They were grateful, too, I'll tell you that.

Were all the services pretty much equal in the kind of the number of injuries?

Yes, the Marines and all the ground troops and the Air Force. I can't speak about the Navy because we saw very few of them, actually. The Navy had its own lines of communication which were different than ours.

There are lots of stories about how the Filipinos supported the Americans and tried everything they could to

We had a fair number of people who were brought out of the Philippines by air evacuation. The Philippine guerrillas and some Americans working with them, held some air fields in the southern part of Luzon which the Japs never did conquer. They would fly in and out of there; take in equipment and personnel and bring out people. We treated some of those in Brisbane. They had been dedicated guerilla fighters.

One of the people who participated in this, Don Dondero, spent a month or so with a guerilla group and they had, apparently, an American liaison. He wasn't even sure what branch of the service the liaison was in or anything. Do you know who those people were?

I can only tell you this; I treated Filipinos who came out wounded or sick, and I treated Americans. Most of the Americans were officer characters. Strangely enough, most of them had a long history in the Philippines. They had a reason to be there before the war.

You came back to the United States before the war was over. You got back sometime between May and August, then?

I got back here around the end of June or July. I served in the surgeon's office, helping to set up what we called "Operation Olympic," which was to be the invasion of Japan. We were setting up 78,000 beds in Australia as the first line of evacuation, and estimating casualties at one million. The Japanese heritage was such that they were going to all die. At the latter part of the war, they weren't trying to win the war, they were just trying to inflict casualties.

If somebody would tape a bunch of grenades to himself and run into a chow line, he obviously

is not winning any battles. He's not doing anything; he's just going to kill somebody.

No, he's going to die for the emperor. Let me go back to things like the naval warfare in the islands. That was terrible from the standpoint of casualties and so forth. Had we ever entered Japan, it would have been just about like the Russian campaigns. They would have fought for every inch and killed everything in sight.

Were you at the stage that you were actually moving the beds into the hospitals?

Yes. Setting up the logistics. We were going to bring a lot of hospitals from Europe to Japan.

But I never knew anything about the atom bomb. Never heard one word of it out there. My training was such that I could understand the makeup of an atomic bomb and how it functions and so forth and what it was likely to be. I did not know at that time about what had taken place in the tests. When we heard about Hiroshima, we knew the war was going to be over very shortly. The only reason for grabbing the second bomb was the fact that the Japs were still going to fight on after the first one. But when they dropped the second one, that stopped it very quickly.

When you heard about Hiroshima, did you hear about the number of casualties?

Yes. We got a rough estimate of the number and we saw the pictures. It was a horrendous sight.

Did you ever see any of the casualties?

No, I never did. Never have seen any of them.

You were already in the United States on VJ Day. You said suddenly you realized that you hadn't thought about anything but war for three and a half years. What did you think then?

I had a profession and I knew roughly that I wanted to stay in the western United States. I knew I'd like to come back to Reno. I loved Reno but the question was could a neurosurgeon survive here? Was there enough work for him?

Just before I got out of the Army, we put on a medical neurosurgical conference showing some end-points of war wounds at the hospital down near Auburn, where I was working right before I left the Army. One of the people who had attended that conference was Dr. Nafsinger from the University of California. He was then the dean of the medical school in San Francisco. I met him at the conference. After I got out of the Army, I went to San Francisco, had an interview with him, and eventually arranged to go to work there on the campus teaching anatomy.

I taught anatomy with Burt Feinstein, who was a splendid neurosurgeon. He was a Canadian who had been in the British Medical Corps during the war. He had done some marvelous work over there on a particular type of medical investigation of nerve and muscle injuries called electromyography. They had developed it at Oxford during the war with all the war wounds. He had written a marvelous report about the development of electromyography and what its uses were. For many years it was the best thing published.

Well, Burt Feinstein and I were working together teaching at Cal. He was going out with this beautiful girl, who was a daughter of a surgeon there at San Francisco, named Diane—they were later married. I thought her father was a marvelous surgeon. As a matter of fact, when I was a student, one summer when

I came home I went down to San Francisco to watch her father operate.

You weren't married at that time? You were married? When did you get married?

I was married after I finished medical school, but that marriage just didn't make it through World War II.

I met a girl from Reno, Roberta Bowers, whom I later married. She was a WAC officer. The way I met her was, one night in Brisbane, Australia, an officer from my unit came back and said, "I've been to MacArthur's WAC unit for dinner." They had the best cooks and the best food in the Army, as you can imagine; he told me about that. Then he said, "Incidentally, there's an officer over there from Reno."

I didn't see many people from Reno, so I called and introduced myself and stayed for dinner, which I had in mind anyway. We became fast friends and I saw her out there in Australia for quite a while. Then MacArthur moved his headquarters to Hollandia, which is up in New Guinea. I went to the Philippines. MacArthur came into the Philippines and she came in with him. I saw her there. After the war, she got out of the Army and went in training in San Francisco to be to be a court reporter. I'd see her occasionally when I was teaching down there. Finally, we decided we'd get married. We were not married until after the war was over. As a matter of fact, we were married in Fallon. Al Seeliger is my brother-in-law, and he was the superintendent of schools out there. We got married at my sister's place up in Fallon.

You talked about when you came back you taught for a year and you watched other surgeons. It sounds very much like it's a transitional period for you.

Yes. The problem is that war neurosurgery is traumatic neurosurgery. It's all trauma. You don't have time to do things like brain tumors and abscesses and vascular things that happen in the brain. You just don't have time for that during the war. So you don't do any of that. So you've got to get yourself back into doing those kinds of things.

What's the difference, in terms that a layman could understand.

The basic approach to these various things is similar. However, the removal of a tumor, for example, is quite different than [operating on] something that's been damaged by a missile. Another thing, things had developed in the course of four or five years. A lot of things had changed. What had just been appearing at the start of the war was now in common use. For example, the development of surgery on the blood vessels and the brain and the body had developed tremendously. I had no experience with this. So I spent that year watching and learning these things. I did some postgraduate work at the University of Michigan in vascular surgery, too.

Like any soldier, whatever you did before the war stopped and it was kind of frozen in time while you did this other thing that was specific to the war. When you came back, the world had marched on. Everybody had to start over. Whether you were a surgeon or a car salesman, the world had changed around you.

That's right. It was [necessary to] retrain yourself. Civilian life is a lot different than Army life. In the military your life is run by the armed forces. After three and a half years of this, to come back into civilian life is quite a change. I made that transition by doing just what we talked about; I spent a year studying,

learning new things, and picking up on and retraining myself on older things that I hadn't used for a while. It was interesting.

I came back to the United States and was offered a job in San Francisco working with Dr. Howard Brown. Dr. Nafsinger controlled all the neurosurgeons in San Francisco; everybody that worked was working with him or under him. He offered me a job there. I certainly considered it because I liked Howard Brown very much, but I had it in my mind to come up here to Reno. When I told Dr. Nafsinger, he said that you can't make a living up there.

I said, "Well, I'm going to try." I did come up here and it was a successful venture. There was plenty of work here for me.

It wasn't difficult even in the beginning to get enough work?

I did like every doctor that comes new into an area. I attended medical meetings all around the state, did lectures, and presented papers on what things I could do that would help. This develops attention right away. I went to Vegas and talked to them . . . in fact, the first conference I attended was in Vegas. I presented a paper down there on spinal surgery. So I developed a practice very quickly.

Years later, Dr. Nafsinger came up to consult with me on one of the Sierra Pacific executives who had some trouble. After the consultation was over and I was driving him to the airport, he suddenly said to me, "You could make a living here, couldn't you." [laughter] So he remembered it.

There's also an emotional transition. You had lived in a world most people didn't live in.

That's right. In the medical corps in the Army, you're answering to somebody above

you at all times. Everything is under close scrutiny. You have to meet the standards that the Army has set up and conform to them. You live in a controlled environment and all of a sudden, you're out of it and it's an entirely different environment. So you're your own boss now and incidentally, you have to pay your own bills, too. In the Army, you know you're going to get a check every so often, so you don't worry about anything else.

Had you managed to save a little money during the war? You said going into the Army you had to borrow money for a uniform.

Well, I was paid. In those days it was good pay, comparably. It was about five or six hundred dollars a month, which was a good income. I had bought war bonds and things like that, so had accumulated something.

How long before you didn't feel the daily life of the war?

I'd say it took a year to get completely back to it.

Lots of men had difficulty coming back and adjusting.

I know they did.

And they went back into the military again because they were looking for something.

There's a lot of psychology involved, I'm sure. One thing that I think about, is that when we fought World War II, we all had a common cause and we understood it. We were all devoted to it. Never again did that exist. It didn't exist in Vietnam. It didn't exist in Korea. The Korean veterans thought they were forgotten people, and so did the Vietnamese

soldiers that we sent over there. I think that was a big factor.

Some people, when they came back, didn't feel that they were welcomed back. They felt they had been replaced and forgotten.

Oh, I'm sure that there were incidents of that . . . probably in business. But in the professions, that really didn't exist. In my own case, when I came to Reno, obviously, there was nobody here doing neurosurgery and the doctors in the community wanted me to come here. I was welcomed. My first office in Reno was with Dr. Roland Stahr, who was a marvelous guy. He had some years of practice before I came in with him, and was a few years my senior. He guided me a great deal. He got me into the practice and talked to me about how to make my position valuable to the other doctors. So it was an easy job with somebody like that to help you and point out the way to go. I was very soon an officer in the state medical association. I got on the board of the Washoe Medical Center, and spent twenty-five years as chairman of that board. We built that hospital. I was president of the state medical association. I founded Reno Surgical. So I was always in a position of leadership.

It seems that the war produced lots of lawyers in this area. Did it produce a lot of doctors, too?

No. The production of doctors was pretty stable and at a constant level, which was probably just about right until the government got into the picture. They decided they were going to reduce the cost of medicine by increasing the size of medical schools. It went wrong someplace because all they produced was people who wanted to make a million dollars apiece. There's a great

difference between a doctor that comes out now and practices, and me. For example, I'm a doctor for the people.

What's the fundamental difference?

Someplace along the way, we lost something or we failed to teach something about the history of medicine. I was a doctor because I wanted to be a doctor. I was a neurosurgeon because I was led into that field by my admiration of certain characters, particularly Walter Penfield. My concept of the practice of medicine was that it was a service to humanity. I treated the sick and wounded regardless of their ability to pay. It never concerned me whether they paid or not. I had the good fortune to have an office manager, a woman who was with me for forty years. She never embarrassed me. We never charged people that didn't need to be charged. If they could pay and didn't pay, she went after them. We never sued anybody. By the same token, when I was running the Washoe Medical Center, we had doctors in the emergency room to take care of the sick and wounded regardless of their ability to pay. Now you can't even get them to work. It started while I was still around.

Doctors would say to me, "I'm not going to work there unless you pay me."

I'd say, "Well, then, turn in your suit for christ's sake and get out of here. You're not a doctor, you're a rug peddler."

Unfortunately, this happened. I've been on staff at UNR's school of medicine. I've set up the teaching program at the VA in neurology and neurosurgery. We had a good program. We turned out a lot of good people. But somehow, we failed to get over to them that the practice of medicine is in the art and sciences. It's not a vocation. It's not just a means of making a living.

The generation of people who were in the Second World War clearly had a different value system than subsequent generations.

I'm sure that's right.

Why do you think that's true? Was it the world before the war, or was it the war, or why is it?

I don't really know that I have an answer to that. My own thought about our own current country is that we're in an era of greed that's unbelievable. We're retracing the steps of the Roman Empire. We've got gladiators, which are athletes, making millions and millions of dollars to run and jump. One of my friends, who was a director of a fine medical center in Philadelphia, said to me he was making a big salary. I said, "Man, that is a gorgeous salary."

He said, "Well, I'm making as much as an outfielder."

It's amazing, isn't it? How about teachers? The most valuable people in the world, and yet the least recognized. I hope we're going to get back to something that's worthwhile, because we're sure going down the wrong path now with our country.

There's a question about war and its place in society. From a humanitarian point of view, no one ever wants a war. But it's a time that changes what's happening and moves it. It changed the Depression into the economy of the 1950's.

That's right.

It changed the sciences to nuclear energy. It changed medicine. It produced techniques and advanced things in ways that weren't conceivable. It certainly changed aviation. It changed a lot of things. It also maybe contributed to the morality of the country.

Does change go so far in one direction that it takes some huge thing to bump us into a new direction?

I guess that may be a factor. We certainly need to be bumped into a different direction now, there's no question about it. If you can remember, the whole automobile industry became the tank industry. We developed a great ship building capacity, which we don't have now. Isn't that interesting? Something has surely happened in those years. The terrible thing was, if the Germans or the Japs had developed the atomic bomb first, we wouldn't be in existence today as a country. They would have used it without question. They would have just wiped us out.

I'd like to tell you about one pleasant episode that occurred right at the end of World War II to a bunch of Nevadans. Johnny Muller was the provost marshal of Manila. Johnny Muller was a Reno man who had worked for Mr. George Wingfield. He and I had been friends in Australia. He had been a provost marshal in Australia before he was one in Manila. He had a terrible job in Manila, because he was provost marshal while the war was still going on.

The fighting had all stopped on the big island. A man from Reno named Johnny Canson owned a huge dance hall in Manila. It was as big as a football field. It was going great with soldiers all over the place. Johnny Canson arranged a dinner party and Johnny Muller pulled us all together. The party consisted of John Muller; Frandsen Loomis, who was an attorney here for many years—he's dead now; Chet Newell, who was a Reno CPA who has passed away now; Denver Dickerson, who was a combat correspondent during World War II and later the governor general of Guam; and Eddie Ginsburg from the Ginsburg family of jewelers in Reno. I

was a member of the group, and so were all of the owners of the Cal Neva Club. We all had dinner together out there one night. Canson got out the oldest, most marvelous booze—he had had it buried during the time the Japs were there. I remember saying to him, “Johnny, you going home?”

He said, “No, I’m not going home. I’m making a million dollars right here.”

We had a great, pleasant time. Loomis was a lieutenant commander in the Navy. Denver Dickerson was a combat correspondent with a sergeant’s rank. Eddie Ginsburg had the greatest job because he was the sergeant in charge of the replacement depot in Manila. He had complete charge of where everybody went.

Everybody has a little story about meeting another Nevadan. It’s almost like you’re from another country and you meet another one someplace else in the world; it was an important event.

It really was because we saw so few Nevadans. One time early in the war, they shipped a boy down from New Guinea to Brisbane with a brain abscess. They brought him down by air. He was very sick. At the time, I didn’t know anything about him except his name was Del Wolfinger. I operated on him one night, drained his abscess, and it was a long, complicated thing but he eventually recovered very nicely. He was from Reno. I didn’t know that at the time I operated on him. He had gone to school with my younger brother.

We were talking about current problems. The problem that I see is just absolute demand on the part of everybody to become a millionaire. And that’s what they’re doing. I was compensated well through my years of practice, but I never overcharged people.

Today, if I’m sick, my own bills at the hospital are fierce. I never charged a doctor or his family, or a nurse, or any of the people working in the profession. But, believe me, I get charged the full charge. There’s a different philosophy existing, and it’s not a good one. The practice of medicine is changing remarkably now and it’s not for the good. Unfortunately, medicine has driven itself into a corner. In the hospitals, they’re doing the same thing. In the years I ran the Washoe Medical Center, we never allowed the charges to go up more than five percent in a year, which was in keeping with the economy. Now they’re out of hand completely.

The Great Depression was the great leveler in the war.

You said your father had lost his business during the Depression.

He never took bankruptcy and he paid all of his bills eventually. The history of my family commences in this country in 1647 when John Mack came from Inverness, Scotland, landed in Massachusetts, and eventually came to live in New London, Connecticut. He had a son named Hezachya who had a son named Orelana. Orelana married a girl named Nancy Fuller who was the granddaughter of Matthew Fuller who came over on the Mayflower. Then my grandfather’s father moved from New London, Connecticut, to Wisconsin.

To go a little further, I was fishing one time in Norway with friends. Our guide was a marvelous Norwegian who had been a freedom fighter in Norway during the war. These are highly respected people, incidently, in Norway . . . all these people who were freedom fighters. He had been an Olympic miler from Norway in the Olympic games and taught English in school there. We had fished a few days together and it was really

marvelous. It was a lovely river we were fishing in out of a little town on the north coast of Norway called Sandane. He said to me, "You're a Norwegian by birth, aren't you?"

I said, "No. I think my family came from Scotland."

He said, "You don't realize it, but Mack is a very common name in Norway."

Probably, the family originated in Norway and came to the east coast of Scotland. Well, after we had fished a few days, he paid me the compliment of saying, "I know you are of Norwegian ancestry." [laughter]

Raiders on the English coast?

Yes. Interesting, isn't it?

One of the girls that worked for me went back to the university after she had retired and got herself a degree in genealogy. She asked me if she could research the family and I said sure. So she did and it's very remarkable. She got us back to King William I of England. I told my daughters this, and one of them said, "Well, I always knew I was a princess."

We were talking about the Great Depression. We may need another Great Depression to bring us all back down to where we start over again. Something, hopefully, will come along and bring us back to where we belong. This is a great country. You know, I think that there's something great in having served your country . . . in having been in the armed forces. You never forget that you served your country, and hopefully you served it well.

Do you belong to any group that does reunions based around the war?

Yes. We had some meetings of the 42nd General Hospital after the war. Most of us are gone now.

Those men were much older, it sounds like.

Yes, some of them were older. They're all gone. Just a few of us left, really. I've lived longer than most doctors live, you know. I don't really know why, but I didn't expect to live this long.

Does that mean that you would have planned better if you had expected to live longer?

No. There's not much that I can do over again. I can tell you this, maybe the greatest moment in my life occurred to me when I was in the Philippines with my surgical team. I wrote a letter to my father, and I said in that letter, "At this moment, I am in the position as the best in what I have been trained to do. If never again I am in this position, I'll never forget this." That's exactly what I was. I was trained to be a brain surgeon and I was right at the peak of my abilities . . . no question. The best was when you had just finished training. The war came at the time when I was ready for it. I can't say anything except that it was a marvelous experience.

Have you been to any of the fiftieth anniversary events?

Well, the Air Force put on this thing here in Reno which I attended. In fact, they gave me a victory medal from World War II, which I had obviously been entitled to and never received. And another which I had neglected to get at the end of World War II. We all got a few decorations. It was nice of the Air Force to do this. That's the only one I've attended.

At one time, I belonged to the part of the American Medical Association which [was composed of] previous military doctors. For many years, I was director of neurosurgery

in the American Medical Association. That's probably the largest group of neurosurgeons in the world. I served them about ten years.

Your leadership didn't grow out of the war. You said you always took leadership roles as you were growing up.

Yes. I had leadership quality from the very beginning. Ralph Menante and I went to the first grade at McKinley Park together. Mrs. Parraguirre, a lovely Basque woman, was our teacher. He said I was the valedictorian of the first grade; we laugh about it. I was president of the junior high school and president of my class at high school. I was an honor student at medical school even though I was working all the time.

Maybe it was something that they taught you at McKinley Park.

Yes. I think so. It's amazing—I was able to take care of Mrs. Parraguirre at the end of her life. In fact, there's a lot of Parraguirre's and other Basque families, and I took care of a lot of them. The first brain tumor I did after World War II in Reno I did at St. Mary's Hospital. It was a large brain tumor about the size of a cup. It was the type that is not malignant called an angioma. Her name was Mrs. Uriaguena . . . a Basque family. When I finished and found that she was still alive, her whole family came in to thank me. Most of them couldn't speak any English.

I had as a patient Mark Essain, who built the first Basque restaurant downtown, the old Santa Fe. Well, he came to me with his back in real trouble. In fact, I carried him into my office one day. I got in the room and I said, "Well, Mr. Essain, you've got this pressure on these nerves and you're going to have to be operated upon."

He said, "You got to do it right away because I got to open my hotel on Friday." This was on Monday.

I said, "Well, I'll do it today, but I can't promise you you'll open a hotel on Friday." I took him to the hospital, operated upon him that afternoon, and Friday he was at the doorway of the hotel to welcome the Basques. Well, as you can imagine, after that every Basque that ever got sick in this area came to my office. Most of them didn't need me, but I would get them sorted out and sent where they belonged. I said to Martin one day, "Martin, maybe you better teach me to speak Basque."

He said, "Doctor, it would be easier for me to teach them to speak English." [laughter] The Basque language is a very difficult one.

ALLEN V. MUNDT

Ken Adams: We could start with you giving us your name, where you born, when you were born, and your family circumstances. Talk about your father and your mother and your life.

Allen V. Mundt: OK. My name is Allen Vernon Mundt. I was born 19 October, 1922, in Menominee, Michigan, much to my displeasure. I became aware of where I was [born] because we were living in Marinette, Wisconsin, from the period that I knew anything about being alive. There was a huge rivalry between those two towns in every respect imaginable, and I never liked to admit that I was born across the river. That's where the hospital was. [laughter]

You were born on the wrong side of the river?

Yes. Now, I've gotten over that a little bit because I just think of myself as being from the upper peninsula, because that's more unique.

Is Menominee in the upper peninsula?

It's right at the bottom of it. It's a neat kind of place because it's almost like being in the west, with trees. My dad was from that area. He was raised in a small town in the county called Amber, which was a granite quarry place, primarily. However, he graduated from high school, I think, in Iron Mountain, upper Michigan. By that time, his family had moved from Amberg down to Marinette. He was one of seven children, I believe. There were five boys (one of them died, and I was named after him) and three girls with the younger girl surviving.

Grandfather was running the Pike River Granite Company in Marinette, which was a big commercial operation. They did a lot of stone work for building facings in Chicago, for example. He was a German native, came over as a child when he was probably about twelve years old, with his mother. And being closer with those grandparents, I was always more inclined to relate to the German side of

the family. Mother was from a little town this side of Rochester, New York called Henrietta. [It is] just now a big town or city. But in those days it was a very nice, tree-lined, little village. My grandfather owned the general store—the store in town—and he was the postmaster and so on.

A little bit of the aviation influence occurred at that point, because the local hero was a fellow named Byron Jones, who was an army pilot (and I since discovered that he was very prominent). Although, in Henrietta, he was kind of thought of as a wild kid who came back with his airplane and buzzed the town from time to time. My grandfather's housekeeper used to hide under the bed and say bad things about that Jones boy who lived across the street. [laughter] But it was very impressive for me to be there when this happened. And, of course, it was the Lindbergh era.

How did your mother get to where your father was, or your father get to where your mother was?

Mother was sent to a girls' school in Battle Creek, Michigan. My dad went to Carroll College in Waukesha, outside of Milwaukee, graduated spring of 1918, and went to officer training at Battle Creek at Camp Custer. He was taking a French class. The French teacher sponsored a little party for some of the officers that were taking this class and brought in selected young ladies. And that's how they got together. They were married in July, a couple days before he went overseas. He was a lieutenant in the machine gun division, was gassed, and was in the hospital when the war ended as a result. [He had a] mastoid operation, that may have been brought on by gas. I'm not sure on it.

He came back after the war and my grandfather set him up in his own monuments business. Later on he had a couple of quarries, also. Marinette County is noted for having very good granite and for also having granite in both grey and red colors in this same proximity, which was unusual I guess. He had that business from that point on, all through his working life. My brother took it over sometime after World War II.

Having a business like that, I assume that you were reasonably stable during the Depression and that the Depression wasn't very severe in your family?

Yes. I'd say the only limitation that I recall was that I never got a good electric train. [laughter] Some of my friends had good electric trains. I never did at that time. That was the only small, small thing. I remember going to the Boy Scout Jamboree, the first national jamboree they had in Washington, D.C. That was 1937. That cost more money than the usual summer camp-out, but I got to go. My brother didn't. And I had every piece of equipment in the Boy Scout catalog that I thought I wanted or needed for the expedition, you know.

How many children in the family?

Three. [I have an] older brother, two and a half years [older]. He's still alive. And [I had] a sister, who was seven years younger than I am, and died of MS about three years ago.

One of the interesting things about my father's family, they had all those kids and all of them went to college, as far I know. Even at the time I started college in 1940, very few people went to college. In my graduating class, if the GI bill hadn't come along, I don't think more than nine or ten would ever have gone to college.

And you were second generation going to college. Both your parents had gone?

Yes.

And all of your uncles?

It's amazing. Very unusual.

Do you suppose it was because your grandfather had a good business and had a good understanding of what was necessary to succeed in the world. Or why do you suppose that was?

Yes. He had a good business. And being German, I suppose education might have been more within his background than somebody else. And the community in general is Nordic. Even now, most of the names may be German or Scandinavian. Everybody was aware of ethnic background back there. We talked about so and so and said he was a Swede or German or an Irishman or something. There were a lot of class distinctions. Farmers were not held in high regard; were kind of like peasants, I suppose. Marinette, then and perhaps now to some extent, was a farming center where we could come in on weekends.

What kinds of things did you do in school? What were your interests when you were in school?

In high school I was a good student. I don't know that I had any particular specialty.

Were you active in athletics?

I wanted to be, but that country is football oriented to a extreme degree and if you, say, wanted to go out for basketball, you couldn't do it unless you played football. Because they

only had one coach for everything, and that was the rule.

Football was the key?

Yes. It's close to Green Bay and it's a religion back there. I was not a big guy. I had been very much interested in football as a grade school kid, you know: sandlot stuff and all that. And my dad was a football player at Carroll College. He's a bigger man than I am. Football was a regular part of his life, too. A lot of his teammates, coaches, even the president of the college, would drop in occasionally to see him because he had been a big man on campus. [I was] just raised that way, with football as sort of a second religion. It was always a big thing with me every fall to make this decision, "Are you going to go out for football this year or aren't you?" I always felt pressure from my dad that didn't exist. I found out two years before he died that he could have cared less which [of his] kids played football or not. [laughter]. But with me it was a very great big thing. And I played color squad football for one season or two seasons in junior high school.

That's intramural football within the same school?

You could call it that. You had a coach, so maybe it was a little beyond intramural. They called them "the color squads": the oranges, and the reds, and the greens, or whatever they were. I think we were the oranges. I'm not sure. But I never played with eleven people simultaneously on one side and that bothered me. [laughter] They were all strange kids that I didn't know and that bothered me. And well, to make a long story short, I never went out. However, when I was a senior, they finally decided they were going to rejuvenate

a track team. They hadn't had one for years. The football coach came to me one time at a party, I think it was, where he was a chaperon or something. "Why don't you come out? We need some guys on this track team."

I had been kind of waiting for some coach to come to me and say, "We need you." If he had done that when I was a freshman, I'm sure that I probably would have went out for football.

The coach came up to me when I first reported and said, "What do you want to do?"

I didn't know anything from anything. I had read a book, *The Javelin*, and at that time the world champion was a small man from Finland roughly my size, and I said, "Jeez, that would be great." But they didn't throw the javelin in high school in Wisconsin. [laughter] It was too dangerous, so that was no good. So I just said, "Well, I don't know."

And he said, "Well, you look like a 440 man to me."

Have you ever heard of that song?

No.

Apparently it's not an unusual thing for a coach to come up with, because nobody wants to run the 440 if they had any sense, I have since learned, though. But the season was short, so my adventures as a tri-athlete were very brief in high school. Then I get to college and this was Ann Arbor, Michigan.

You graduated in 1939?

I graduated from high school in 1940 and I went to Ann Arbor that fall to study forestry. There wasn't any forestry in Wisconsin. Here again, my state loyalty was being tested. Logically, and in my heart, I wanted to go to Madison because that was Wisconsin, but they had no forestry school there at that time.

Michigan had a very good one so that's where I ended up.

Anyhow, PT was compulsory for freshman there, as it should, but I was bitching about it one day to a fraternity brother. He was the manager of the freshman track team. He was a sophomore, but that was his outside assignment. He said, "Well, you don't have to go to PT if you're out for a varsity sport."

I said, "Well, I'm not an athlete."

He said, "Well, isn't there anything in track you'd like to do?"

I said, "Yes, I'd like to throw the javelin."

"Well," he said, "the coach is a nice guy," which I didn't believe. I had never seen a coach that I thought was a nice guy. "He's a nice guy. Come on out and talk to him." So I did.

And the coach said, "Fine, we only have one javelin thrower and you can go out and throw it back and forth. You can help him; he can help you." So there was no coaching, really. I did that for a while and wasn't any good at it, either, but at least nobody said anything and I was having fun.

Ann Arbor has a winter like you have never experienced. It's really worse in the farther north, because it goes from to slop to colder and back and forth. Obviously you couldn't be out in the field throwing javelins around under those circumstances. So we went into the field house and the coach said, "Well, we have a net where, theoretically, you could throw a javelin with a big spring on the end of it into the net. You can't do that right now because one of the other teams is using it for something. You just work out and we'll be able to get that net sooner or later." Well, I just jogged around the track, pulled wall weights, and stuff like that for a while. And finally, the coach came to me one day, and he said "You know, that net thing is never going to be available in time. So we're going

to have to get you doing something else. You look like a 440 man to me.” [laughter] Shortly thereafter . . . I had to tie that scene in.

I’ll always regret that they didn’t pay more attention to you as an individual and give you goals to shoot for within your possible scope. That’s one thing the Air Force did for me, by the way. They treated you as an individual and tested you physically and so on.

From the mid-1930s on, the rest of the world, at least Europe, was very cognizant of the fact that there was a war coming. You lived in a community that had strong ties to Germany. Was there a strong awareness where you lived about the war with Germany?

I don’t think [there was] very much at that point. Apparently, in World War I, it was severe in Wisconsin where there are a lot of Germans. In fact, I believed they burned German textbooks. By the time I came along, you still couldn’t take German in high school, under law. But I don’t recall any kind of negative feelings toward the German population. There were too many of us there, I guess.

Were your grandparents interested in what was going on and did they have relatives over that they were concerned about?

They weren’t in contact with any relatives. And I don’t think there were very many. I was never aware of my grandparents having any strong ties with Germany. I don’t remember my grandfather having an accent. He may have had. He had a Hitler moustache. One interesting or curious little thing, he always had Blackjack chewing gum waiting for me when I went over to visit. I have since learned that’s not uncommon with German grandfathers because the flavor of Blackjack

chewing gum is anise, licorice, which is a very popular spice in Germany.

You weren’t thinking a lot about Europe and what was going on as you were in high school? It wasn’t a serious concern in your mind?

We were aware of what was going on in Europe—very much aware. Then, of course, as things began to deteriorate over there after the Finnish/Russian war, we were all very much aware of that. We were getting the *Weekly Reader* in school. I don’t know if they still have that or not, but it kind of kept us up to snuff on what was happening throughout the world.

You started college in 1940, so in December of 1941 you were . . . ?

Well, I was in pre-forestry. They had two years of pre-forestry there. You weren’t actually in the forestry school itself until you were a junior, or near a junior. Sometimes you went to summer camp in between your sophomore and junior year. But I didn’t do that until after the war. I was in a fraternity house. I was a sophomore. I had two roommates. One of them was in Naval ROTC and he was ultimately killed by a kamikaze on a destroyer in Okinawa in 1945.

But it was late afternoon, as I remember. I think we were simulating studying or something and the news came on. We were shocked, of course. I don’t know whether or not we figured we were vulnerable or not. I just don’t remember a whole lot about that particular moment: a dreary, cloudy, winter afternoon in Ann Arbor.

Did it inspire thoughts of we have to go out and fight back?

Oh, yes.

Did you immediately talk about when you were going to enlist and what you were going to do? What did you talk about then?

I don't remember. I was obviously not aware. I didn't have any real response about what I wanted to do. My mother had talked me out of this pilot craze when I was about eleven years old. She had taken all my flying aces magazines and thrown them away and told me that I was not going to be a pilot. So I was footloose for about a year . . . no ambitions. Then I got hold of a book called *Bob Flame, Ranger*. This guy was a forestry graduate who had just gone to the Park Service. And one of the first things he had to do was pick out a pair of skis that said Yellowstone. So I thought, "Wow! That sounds good to me." That was my next ambition. [laughter] I wasn't thinking much about being a pilot until spring 1942, the following spring.

Up until that time, you just continued to go to school?

I think we all kind of hoped, "Well, you are a student. Maybe you won't have to go over," or something like that. I'm not sure. I don't recall any vivid urge to go over and kill Japanese.

Anyway, that spring I was taking a class in taxonomic botany from a lady who was somewhat famous among the students because she and another woman were the first two to go down the Colorado River and survive. She used to give little talks about it once in a while and show movies and whatnot, you know. The particular day that it was a decision for me, was the day when I was supposed to go with her and a bunch of girls and other students in the class on a, supposedly, exploratory trip of the botany on the local river in canoes. What it was really going to be was a big picnic. That was in

the afternoon, when the class was normally scheduled.

At noon, in the fraternity house, a contemporary [of mine] named John Agler, came up to me and he said, "You know, the aviation cadet screening board or team is here. This is the last afternoon they'll be here. We have to make up our minds what we're going to do. Why don't we go down and take the exam and the physical and get it out of the way."

I don't recall even knowing that they were around. Then I had this big decision to make. Am I going to go have fun with the girls in the canoes or am I going to take this thing?

In that era, you could be interested in aviation, but the idea of actually being a military pilot seemed almost impossible. The Hollywood depictions of pilots made them seem like supermen. My football coach when I was in that color squad thing, a guy named Chuck Harmer, looked like Burt Reynolds and Burt Lancaster rolled into one. I mean he was really an impressive guy. And some place along in there, before I graduated, he decided to get out of this teaching business and become an Army pilot. He went down to Randolph Field and he was washed out in a month. [laughter] That just cemented this feeling that it was an impossible thing for a normal human being.

Anyway, John talked me into going down and taking the exam and so forth. We passed and became, officially, privates in the enlisted reserve corps on the 7 of July 1942. That was done down in Milwaukee in the post office building, I think I remember. The theory behind the enlisted reserve program was that they would leave you in college as long as they possibly could. That sounded like a good idea to me, too. And they did do that.

There wasn't any pressure the following fall, the fall semester of 1942. I got enrolled

in the second semester in 1943 and right off the bat, we all had indications that we were not going to complete that semester. I don't know what the indications were, but in any case, we wouldn't do any studying. [laughing] All of a sudden it was blue book time. I knew what blue books meant by the time I was a junior, and that was not something to be taken lightly. And we began to feel a little bit clanked. Then all of a sudden, right about the same time President Ruthren of the university put a notice in the student paper that anybody in the enlisted reserve had better get his affairs in order, because he was going to be called up to active duty shortly. That's all we needed, of course. We immediately went down and got our money back and headed for home. My mother didn't really believe that this was a good idea that I left school that way and was on my case for a number of days. But being home and goofing off and sleeping late and seeing my girlfriend every once . . .

One morning she came in. I guess she was happy about it. I don't know if I was or not. She had the notice of my call to active duty. A few days later [I was at a] reception facility [that] turned out to be a warehouse in Chicago. We got together there and they sent us out on troop train. [I spent] a couple of days en route down to Miami Beach where they had a basic training center. And I went through regular Army basic training down there.

Do you remember anything about basic training?

Oh, yes.

What was basic training like?

First thing I remember is that I just didn't like Florida. It was hot, humid, and eighty-five when I got there. It was twenty below

zero when I left home. I was half way sick for, probably, two weeks, which wasn't helped a whole lot by a lot of shots and lousy food. They had this motto, of course, in the chow halls, "Take what you can eat and eat what you can take." The guy that's serving the slop at you would delight in giving you a lot more than anybody wanted, particularly in that kind of heat where you weren't hungry anyway. So we came up with little games like looking for empty peanut butter jars that were on the table and putting the remains of lunch, breakfast, or whatever in there, because they wouldn't let you leave the facility with anything on your tray.

The traditional stories are that boot camp is a time when they deprive you of your identity, yell and scream at you, and then hold this carrot out to you to achieve this new status that's become important. They did a lot of things to improve you physically. Was one of their objectives to make people grow bigger and stronger than they were?

No, I didn't realize they were trying to pump me up with food, but I don't think they had much luck with it. [laughter] They had taken over a whole bunch of hotels down there. So, when I say I did my basic training at Miami Beach in a hotel, it sounds pretty neat. We were not in one of the big fancy hotels. We were in a fleabag kind of thing. It was new, but it was very basic and not a whole lot better than the barracks, actually. Oh, we had private rooms. I don't know how many men were in there, but possibly three or four hundred. The commander of the hotel was a corporal and he was the . . .

Commander of a hotel . . . ?

If you ever saw an officer on the street, particularly one with wings, you knew what

the god of the gods was. They were just wonderful, of course. And you wouldn't even think about talking.

Initially, we didn't have any uniforms. We were all college boys that got on these trains in various places in our college clothes: probably wing tipped oxfords or saddle shoes or something, and slacks, and in those days always the sport jackets, and I don't know if we wore ties to school or not, but [the clothes were] fairly fine. We were in those clothes when we got down there and [had] nothing much to change into. I don't think we brought a whole lot. We were cut down to one bag, probably. So our initial drilling was in very uncivilized garments. And of course, we would march or do whatever they wanted to do with us. Well, when we finally got our uniforms, that was an interesting process. We're marching through this warehouse and they're throwing this stuff at you and they're [not concerned if] it fits precisely, that's beside the point. There's not a warm, friendly atmosphere. [laughter] You're a lump out there and they're taking care of business.

I had a roommate, a kid from the suburbs of St. Louis. And he was a number one character. He kind of kept a little humor going. Finally, [we] got enough arms and could do all this marching stuff. [We would go to] the rifle range, where [we had] Enfield rifles from the British World War I.

On one particular occasion, we had to get all these shots. The idea of sticking needles in my tender body always really bothered me and I had fainted a number of times when that happened. I think I knew, or I thought I knew, that if you fainted at any point in this program I was in, you were going to be eliminated. So the tension was building up. [laughter]. I don't know if I can recall any more tension before a mission when I was

actually flying during the war. But you're in a long line going through these tents in this hot field someplace. I kept steeling myself up, which I suppose makes it worse, I don't know. But eventually you arrived at the point where they were shoving needles in both arms and probably three or four different deals. Then you pop out the other end, you go down and hide under a palm tree someplace, and you'd feel that nausea kind of slowly creeping in on you. I thought boy, I'm going to faint and there's nothing to do about it. And about that time, we had to regroup and start marching back to the hotel. We started marching and my peripheral vision began to disappear. I was concentrating on the back of this guy in front of me to try to keep from falling down. And all of the sudden, it began to rain. It was like a gift from heaven, because it just snapped me out of it and I didn't pass out. [laughter]

And even though this is basic training, you were in cadet training? In any phase that you weren't satisfactory, you'd be out of the cadet program?

Probably. That was what we thought. I don't know that I saw any examples of that nature.

Was the belief growing in you that you could make it?

No.

You still couldn't believe you were going to make it as a pilot?

When we came in the basic training center from the train, these people who had been there for a while, they were all yelling at you, "You'll be sorry! You'll be sorry!" [laughter] So that lasted, I suppose, a month or so. I don't remember how long basic training was.

To get back to the beginning of this thing, this enlisted reserve corps, I have found out in reading in just recent years, that the reason we were called out at that time, even though as it turned out they didn't have slots for us in flight training immediately available, was because the draft board was after the Air Force to do something with us or turn us over to the draft boards. The Air Force had this big block of fresh young meat that the draft board couldn't touch, and the Air Force wasn't doing anything with them. So they put the pressure on them and the Air Force called us all in to go through basic training, they had room for that. But they didn't have room for us in pre-flight and so on, immediately. So what they did was send us all back to college—not the same college. There were colleges all over the country, including UNR, that had college training detachments (CTD's). And the idea was these would be the holding pattern for you until there were slots, and you'd be taking your college classes, a little bit of aviation stuff; theory of flight, a little weather, and so on. Whether the local people thought it would be a good idea would depend, I think, on whether or not they had anybody who was qualified to teach those things. I know we were taking an English class, and that's where I got interested in aviation literature.

Where were you assigned?

Clarion State Teachers College in Pennsylvania, a little state teacher's college north of Pittsburgh about ninety miles. A nice little place. This was in the spring.

Got you up there close to the home of those guys with the strange sense of humor from Pittsburgh. [laughter]

Yes, yes. They were so far ahead of us, you know, it seemed like them being sophisticated.

But they also gave us ten hours of flight instruction in the Piper J-3, a light aircraft. A typical guy probably had never even been up in an airplane prior to that. I had been up in one twice. First time was 9 of August, 1929. We went to my mother's home area and I came home to tell her that the little boys had went up in an airplane. She wouldn't believe me. It was that unique in those days. The second time was when I was working fire crew in Montana when I was a forestry student in the summer of 1941. They took us to a fire.

So anyhow, we were in this CTD thing, and they divided us into what they called clientele; five groups. The one you were put in was based upon your test scores from basic training. It was a good thing I was one of the ones who ended up in the first clientele.

The townspeople were crazy about having us there. Our troop train was the first passenger train that had come into this town in a long, long, time. I think we arrived in about two o'clock in the morning after being on this horrible troop train for about three days and we were all groggy and dirty and whatnot. We come into this little station, two o'clock in the morning, and there's a band playing and all the townspeople are out greeting us. [laughter] So it was a wonderful little situation as far as being treated with a better attitude than we had there in basic training.

The first clientele would be the first group to go onto flight training, is that right?

We were only there six weeks.

So this was in the fall 1942?

No, this was spring of 1943. I went to basic training in February and finished that up and went to Clarion probably late March, early

1943. It's the kind of town where they would invite you over for dinner. We were restricted for about two weeks. The first weekend they turned us loose, there wasn't anybody eating in the mess hall. They were all adopted by the people downtown. We had to go to church, by the way. They had a big church formation, had them parading around downtown, and the group that was going to go to the Presbyterian church would march off and then the Baptists, then whatever it was . . . you had to go to church. And I remember, as we marched to church, we used to sing "Onward Christian Soldiers." [laughter]

The flying was the most traumatic part of the training for all of us. We took it very seriously. They didn't allow you to solo. They'd give you ten free hours introductory [flight training]. Which, certainly in my case, helped me when I finally got to military flight training in primary school. This [training] was all done by civilians, [the Air Force] contracted them.

I remember we were taking English and we had a lady teacher. Looking back on it, these people are all men, all guys that were going to go to war. [Teaching] English or any other subject that didn't directly relate to what they were going to be doing must have been a bit of a challenge.

And this lady wisely saw it. "Well, we're going to talk. This is going to be English, but maybe I can find something related to aviation that you would be interested in and pay attention to."

So she came up with mimeographed sheets of this poem, "High Flight", which I'm sure you've seen. "Oh, I have slipped the surly bounds of earth and dawn come." It was brand new. It was written by a fellow who reminds me a lot of Burt Styles, the guy who wrote "Serenade to the Big Bird." And he, too, was killed after he wrote this memorable poem of

a fighter. She got our attention with that poem and that was, I suppose, the beginning of my interest in aviation literature.

We finished up there and went down to what is now Lackland Field in San Antonio. At that time it was called the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, abbreviated to SAACC. The initial phase there was classification, where they tested you to find out whether you're best suited for pilot training, or navigator training, or bombardier training. It lasted probably a month or so. We were then transferred just across the base to another section called, "pre-flight." Everybody got involved in things like learning code, signal flight, navigation; I suppose a little bit of everything. [It was] very intensive [with a] lot of PT. The individual testing that I referred to earlier, they started doing this to us up in Clarion where every month, let's say, they would run you through a test procedure and keep a record of how you had done.

This is all part of your physical classification?

No, the physical testing started when we were in CTD, and it was continued after that in pre-flight and all the way through, actually. They would give you the same test. It consisted of pull-ups, which I at least had never seen before in high school, and what they call a shuttle relay, where you ran between two stakes maybe seventy yards apart or something. I think you did two runs around those things and they were timed. The sit-ups and the pull-ups were not timed, it was just a max effort there to see how many you could do, no matter what the interval of time was.

I was not a great performer in this test and, particularly, I was discouraged by the situps where I think my buddy and I came out about C or C-, something like that. And he and I decided we were going to work on

that individually. Which he didn't do. Sit-ups were not part of the regular test exercise. So he and I would do sit-ups whenever we had a chance in the barracks. We got to the point where we were doing the max, which is 114. It didn't take very long, actually. I was sort of learning to exercise, I think, more than building myself up.

Well, there was a lot of running; a heck of a lot of running down at pre-flight. They had a cross country course, they had an obstacle course, and they had a track. That's three different kinds of running. And after you had done your one or two hour workout, you always had to run around the track "x" number of laps, whatever it was. So there was a lot of running. And I still didn't like it. That's through pre-flight.

At that point, they finally send you to legitimate flight training. In my case it was to Muskogee, Oklahoma, a little place called Hatbox Field. We had PT-19's as trainers. The instructors were all civilians, but the check pilots were all military and the administration was a combination of a civilian contractor plus a captain. They, probably, were the two people that ran the place.

[They had] very good food. [They] would feed you quite well, except when we were flying. Most phase instructors believed that if you couldn't learn to fly under a certain amount of pressure that you shouldn't be going into combat, so they did a certain amount of yelling at us and . . .

Was that a battle theory?

I don't think so. [When] I became an instructor, the theory then was that you didn't do that. If your flight commander thought that you were abusing your students, it wouldn't look good on your efficiency report. But that wasn't the case in those days. My instructor

never did this to me, but if you could move a stick across . . . Well, these were tandem arrangements back then. You would be an instructor sitting in front and each [student] would have a control stick in the middle of their legs. Well, if you moved fast enough, it doesn't affect the airplane at all and you can make your students' legs black and blue. That was one of the things that was done. We didn't have radio communication in those airplanes. The instructor would talk to you through a speaking tube that came back to a couple of other tubes that went into your helmet. If he got ticked off, he could just stick that out and it slaps you and you get a blast of air in you ears and your helmet would go like that. My instructor wasn't that mean, but he wasn't at all hesitant to tell me that I was a dumb dodo and I thought he felt the urge . . .

This is the summer of 1943?

No, now we're in the fall of 1943.

By now, you've been in an aviation program as a cadet at least since July of 1942. So you've been in over a year. Did you think back to that poor teacher who had washed out after a month?

I thought about him all the time. You see, this primary phase is when they wash you out. The major wash out was in a curve up to . . . there was a horror story about one primary school where they washed out half of the students.

You've already finished your primary?

No. I haven't even had a flight check. I'm still learning how to fly with my ass chewing instructor whose name was Rex Painter, a nice guy on the ground but a tiger or a jackal or

something in the air. This was the wash out phase. If you made it through here, chances are you had a chance.

Did they keep up the physicals and running and testing?

Very much. There was, I think, sixty-five hours of flying time. And you were supposed to solo before you had twelve hours, on an average. People soloed at, maybe, nine hours. I don't know. I soloed at eight, which was OK. I wasn't the first to solo. A little later on, I didn't feel like I was behind the power curve.

They had a custom there of identifying the pre-solo students by making them wear a strip of white tape over the helmet. It was called a skunk stripe. On my last dual flight that thing came loose and it was flopping around in front of my goggles, you know. And my instructor looks back and he says, "Tear that thing off!" And I did. I felt guilty about it because I hadn't soloed yet, but he told me to do it, so I did.

I got lost once while I was soloing later on there. [laughter] They always had auxiliary fields around the main base. If you had all your students trying to do touch and go landings or practice landings on the main base there were too many people. So we had these auxiliary fields. I got lost when I came in from the auxiliary field back to the main base, but I found it. [laughter] I wasn't lost too long.

I'm still with some of the people that I had been with in CTD. We've become very close at this time because we're going through the big test; whether or not you're going to be able to get through primary. And we're all going to church regularly trying to get ourselves a little edge. [laughter]

So you're practicing sit-ups in the barracks and going to church?

Yes. [laughter]

Getting whatever edge you can get?

Right. [laughter] And the people that washed out in primary, oh there was a general theory: Jewish guys weren't physically coordinated and would wash out quickly. I have since decided they were probably smarter than the rest of us and had decided that maybe that was a good thing to do.

We had a character that I'd known every since CTD named Mike Mendlen, who was a very streetwise kind of smart Jewish kid from New York City. He liked the girls. When we got to San Antonio he immediately got a hold of the society pages in the Sunday newspaper to find out who the good-looking girls were in town, you know. And then he would call them. He was our operator.

But he got washed out?

I was very happy to see real athletes getting washed out: basketball player types and football player types. That made me feel a little better.

I kind of liked Muskogee. It was more like a midwestern town than Texas had been; there were shade trees down the streets and so forth. People in general were pretty nice.

We finished up there and went to the next place which was Coffeyville, Kansas, a freight town. We stepped up to a bigger airplane called a BT-13. And certainly [this was] a military operation on a military base with military instructors. My instructor was from Antigo, Wisconsin, about sixty miles west of Marinette. We kind of hit it off and I thought that was nice.

I think they only washed out about ten percent in basic. One of the guys that [washed out] then really hadn't wanted to fly. He

wanted to be a navigator. And he was a real sharp guy, too. He didn't give any obvious signs of not being interested, but in basic he didn't solo and they sent him to what was called the "bumblebee section", which was a special opportunity for marginal students. I remember he came down one day and his instructor said, "Morrison, how do you feel about soloing? I think you can solo."

Morrison said, "I don't feel very good about that, sir." [laughter]. But his instructor made him solo, anyway. Then he washed him out a few days after that.

What percentage of your class washed out in primary?

About thirty-five percent I think.

Then another ten percent washed out in basic?

And of course there had been a lot of elimination prior to that in the initial screenings and so forth. I don't know what the actual figures were; how many go try and how many end up coming out the other end. [The figures were] significant enough to make you feel like you had accomplished something, certainly.

At Coffeyville, that was the first time anybody got killed. There would be two classes on each base at the same time, an upper class and a lower class. Our upper class at Coffeyville had a number of fatalities. We began to call the place, "Coffinville." They changed the program a little bit for us so that we weren't quite in the high risk category. They had solo night navigation, and that's when the accidents seemed to happen. So they cut that out for our class and subsequent classes. And we only had one fatality, I think. But it was a very, very basic military base, with tar paper shacks and just coal stoves in these little shacks.

The big thing that happened to me in basic was getting caught buzzing. We were delayed a lot in our flying by bad weather, so we were always trying to make up time on days when the weather was good, including weekends. I remember we were quite far along in the program, maybe half way through. On a Sunday they sent us out to do solo navigation and we were supposed to get "X" amount of time. The actual cross country flight didn't take quite that long. They said, "When you get back, bore a hole through them." They didn't say it that way, but we were supposed to get the additional [flight] time. I got caught buzzing on this particular occasion. Everybody else was screwing up also, but I was the one that was caught. And my instructor, Lt. Schultz, was no longer quite as pleased with his Wisconsin cadet as he had been. They were going to court-martial me. My first thoughts were, oh my God, I'm ruining the family name, and so on, and so on. They grounded me but they made me continue to go to academics and to link training, which is simply your flight instrument training. Neither of these were very appealing; they were the least enjoyable parts of the program.

Link training . . . could you describe it a little bit?

It's a little blue box, that looks like an abbreviated airplane, approximately the size of your desk. You have a hood or a cover that comes down over you, and you fly this thing on code by the instruments. There is an instructor—these were never flight instructors, they simply trained and operated the link trainer—and whatever you do is recorded on a piece of paper with a stylus. And they give you navigation problems, and approaches for landing, and so forth. It was the initial type of an instrument trainer, or simulator.

I gather that you spend a considerable amount of time in the link.

They logged it just like flying time. It was not a perfect simulation of an airplane; the way it operated was mechanical, rather than sensitive, the way an airplane would be. So I'm doing that for a while.

They send me over to the judge advocate to get my testimony taken for the court-martial and all this sort of thing. They restricted me. Christmas Eve, I couldn't go out of town like everybody else did, and so on, and so on. [It was a] very bad time. Then all of a sudden they said, "Well, you're way behind, you've got to start getting your flying time again." They're still not taking me off the court-martial list; they're holding that over me. To make a long story short, I completed all of the flight training, finally. They came up with orders on where we were supposed to go for our advanced training. At this point, they would separate the fighter pilot candidates from the bomb or transport pilot candidates. You'd ask for one or the other, but whether you got one or the other would depend on how you had performed as a cadet.

What was your choice?

I guess they figured, if this kid liked to buzz, maybe he should be a fighter pilot.

Was that your choice? Was that the one you asked for?

Yes, that was my choice. I didn't want the responsibility of a lot of other people in the airplane. I didn't like other people in the airplane. I didn't like an instructor in the airplane. I wanted to be alone. So, they come out with these lists and, of course, I didn't

expect to see my name on it, because I'm supposed to be court-martialed, but my name is on the list to go to advanced flight training down at Aloe Field at Victoria, Texas. So I went to my flight commander, Lieutenant Pike. I will never forget him; he's kind of a cool guy. I reported to him and I said, "Sir, I'm on the list to go to Aloe, but I'm supposed to be court-martialed." [laughter]

I wish I had a recording of his thoughts at that point, because I imagine he couldn't believe what he was hearing from this dumb kid from Wisconsin. So he said, "Cadet, if I were you, when it's time to get on that troop train, I would get on it and I wouldn't say anything to anybody about supposed to be court-martialed." [laughter] So that's what I did.

In advanced they didn't wash out more than five percent. Advanced training was in T-6's. Aloe was way down in Texas, not . . .

So at this point you'd be fifty percent . . . ?

Two-thirds of the way through flight training . . .

How many are left?

Well, the wash out . . . fifty percent, that's about right. I'm still with people that I knew up in Clarion, so by now we are very, very close to each other, even though my particular buddy and I disliked each other initially. [We disliked each other] intensely, I think. He was a big guy from Alabama and I was the little Yankee. He sat in front of me. He'd scored a little better than I had in the test scores, and you sat strictly the way your test scores were. He was also a cadet officer. They liked to organize things so the cadets ran as much of the program as they could. The kids with military backgrounds, or with

loud voices, or with imposing stature would end up as cadet commanders. He was one of those. So I hated him. To make a long story short, his first son is named after me. [laughter]

You're still friends?

I see him quite often. This boy, this son of his, is a very successful lawyer over in San Francisco.

Advanced training wasn't anything special. We loved the airplane; it was the first time we had one where the gear would come up. We did gunnery in it. I got lost once but survived that. Our upper class, before they finished there and before they actually got their wings, flew P-40's the last few hours of their training.

This is in the spring of 1944?

Yes. They gave us our officer's allowance to get our clothing. We all went downtown to Victoria and got measured up. You really began to feel like a white man, so-to-speak, as we used to say. We're finally getting close to the goal and then it happened, we got commissioned one evening. We were given a couple weeks leave. It was the first time I actually had an overnight leave. I had had day passes a few times but [not overnight leave]. I left on a train out of Houston and got home and saw the old girlfriends.

That was a plural. There wasn't any particular person?

I had met this gal just about the time I graduated from high school. She was from Menominee, which was always the case it seemed like; the prettiest girls were from across the river. She was a little Swedish gal.

You had written to her all during this time?

Oh, yes, [letters were] very important. Mail call, as you've been hearing, I'm sure, was extremely important.

Who else did you write to?

I wrote to my folks. My brother was in the service. He had gone to OCS [officer candidate school]. He became commissioned before I did. So we corresponded. We had become reasonably close. We fought as kids. [He was] two and a half years older, and he always bullied me a little bit, or at least I thought he did, and we were always fighting. That continued until I was as big as he was and then it stopped. He went away to college before I did and we were separated for a period of time. We got kind of civilized, you know. So I wrote him, and my girlfriend, and my folks, and one or two college buddies.

One of them was a pilot in the Pacific. And this might be of interest; they had the censorship business, you know. Dave was flying B-25s in the Pacific but I had no idea where he was. He was giving me advise on things to come in my training, and if I was going to the Pacific, things I should do to prepare for that, and so on. In one of my letters to him, I mentioned a scandal involving a teacher that we had both known, named Mr. Russell. I had mentioned his name in my letter. When Dave's letter to me came back, anytime a reference to Mr. Russell had been made, it was cut out. You could tell by the context that he was talking about Mr. Russell, but the name Russell was always cut out of the letter. So, obviously, he was in the Russell Islands. That was one case where [the censorship] kind of backfired on them.

My leave was wonderful. Then we went back to the same base to get our P-40 transition. That was the first time we'd . . .

Did you consider getting married?

No, not at that point.

Lots of people, under the pressure of knowing that they're going to combat, considered marriage at that point.

I don't think any of my buddies did, and I was close with a lot of these guys. She had my fraternity pin; she had had that for a couple of years. I gave that to her.

The P-40 was a big adventure; it's the first time you fly an airplane without having any dual time in it. So that was pretty exciting. And as soon as you flew it once, for one hour, perhaps, then you could say, "I'm a fighter pilot—I've flown a P-40." [laughter] That went along fairly well until my last flight. I had to make a go-around, my engine overheated, and I thought that I was going to have to make a crash landing. I staggered around and . . . I really didn't like the P-40 except, I liked to say I'd flown it. [laughter]

My buddy, the one that named his son after me, the two of us took off one weekend and went down to Corpus Cristi. Corpus was a Navy town. Somebody had told him that if he went down there [as an] uniformed Air Force pilot, the girls would go crazy. [laughter] And to a very small extent, as it worked out, that happened. That, if anything, made us ready to go to further fighter training in these fighters that, theoretically, you're never going to fly in combat.

I had always wanted to fly P-47's. Even though, initially, our class was all supposed to fly P-38's, they all ended up doing the P-47's. The training for that was on the east coast, in Richmond, Virginia.

An operator that I had known every since Clarion CTD said we were supposed to go on a troop train from Victoria up to Richmond.

It was going to take three or four days, but if you happened to have a car, you could get what they call "authority to travel by private vehicle (PTA)." They only expected you to drive two hundred miles a day, so it gave you some additional time in which you could go home, see your girlfriend. [laughter] So this guy—he's a hot dog from Indiana—came up to me and said, "Why don't we put in for PTA?"

I said, "Do you have a car?"

He said, "No."

I said, "I don't have a car. We can't go PTA." I think you're beginning to get the picture.

He said, "We'll put in for it anyway. We'll get this extra time."

So he did and we got the extra time. The result of that was that when I finally got to Richmond all of my contemporaries, including my particular buddy Phil, had already gone through the processing. Most of them had already gone to other bases for actual training. So, I'm sitting with a bunch of guys that I had never seen before, which I didn't really like. After our initial indoctrination on a P-47, we were kept right there to fly the airplane in Richmond. It turned out that Richmond was probably the worst base you could be at because everything went at a slow pace. I had buddies that ended up going overseas from my class, and late August, I hadn't completed my training at Richmond, or my P-47 training until September, a month or so later. I didn't go overseas until October. I had friends that had flown combat for a couple of months before I really got over there.

So that, I didn't care about, but [I cared that] I was thrown in with a whole bunch of new guys. The training in the P-47 went reasonably well at Richmond. That was preliminary training. Our gunnery training was done up at Dover, Delaware, which was a much nicer base. We did ground gunnery, aerial gunnery, dive bombing, skip bombing,

and smoke screens . . . a little bit of everything. I accumulated about eighty hours and liked it very much. I'd always wanted to fly a P-47, so there I was, and it worked out good for me. I went overseas around the 12 of October of 1944, on the Queen Mary, which was pretty nice except it was crowded. It was three or four days [going] across. [We] landed in Scotland. To begin with, we went by the Statue of Liberty. It was the first time that I had ever seen it, and I thought probably it was going to be my last time. I still hadn't gotten over the idea that this whole business was beyond me. That being a fighter pilot was a great, wonderful accomplishment, but probably I would end up in a sack.

The ship was very crowded. I think our state room was designed for two people and we probably had eight or twelve in there. [We had] bunks like this and we were carrying a lot of baggage. We had to carry our own parachutes, for example, and all of the flight gear and whatnot. It was a lot of baggage and it was all in that one little room.

One night at Greenock, Scotland, we were worried a little bit about submarines. We'd be, theoretically, on watch in a section of the ship during a period of time. They used this for little Mickey Mouse officer duties that they could think of. The famous ace on board, Colonel Don Blaklee from the 4th Fighter Group (he had been in the Eagle Squadron and so forth and so forth), had, I guess, a very nice state room way up above someplace. And there were two hundred nurses on board and we understood that he was taking advantage of that, you know. We weren't able to do that, of course. They weren't a particularly good looking bunch of girls. I think out of the two hundred, there were two that caught my eye.

You could see them but you couldn't talk to them?

Oh, you could talk to them; we were officers, you know . . . theoretically.

My first look of Scotland: [it] was kind of gray and dreary with stone buildings. We get on a troop train [and go to a] little reception center down at a place called Stone-in-England.

We're supposed to be a rush shipment. They were supposed to be in big need of us. So, theoretically, we were going to get going in a few days; it turned out we were there for three weeks. I managed to get a leave to go see my brother in London, which was a very rare, unusual thing to have happen. Finally, we got our orders to go onto the continent. This is in, probably, the first week of November 1944. Again the weather was kind of lousy and so forth. They flew us over in a cargo version of a B-24. We landed outside of Paris and they took us to this reception center at what had been the Rothschild's Chateau in the Bois de Boulogne. The Chateau itself was intact. The Germans had been using it as a center for a radio station. Lord Ha Ha, this British ex-patriot, had been broadcasting for the Germans from that site. That was interesting. We were in tents out in the mud and trying to keep warm with coal stoves and we didn't have enough coal. We were sleeping on cots and in all our flying clothing with a few blankets.

Somewhere while we were there, probably after five days or six days, they came to us and said, "OK, we need replacement pilots in these groups."

There were, like, nineteen of them over there flying P-47's. We didn't know one group from the other; it was kind of like shooting dice, you know. Fortunately for us, there was a fellow in our tent who had been with a 365th Fighter Group. He hadn't cut the mustard, so they were sending him home. He told us that if he had to make the decision, he would go back to that group because he thought it was a good operation. Somebody

said, "I'll tell you, that's what we'll do. We put in for that group," and we got it.

We traveled by train up to Brussels. They picked us up in a truck to take us to the base, which was a little town called Chierre, Belgium. The big city near there is Mons, which was a center of activity in World War I, but we didn't know that.

By this time we had been en route for almost three months and hadn't flown an airplane in that length of time. There were twelve of us that went in there as replacements. They split us up among the three squadrons in the group they attached us to. People who I had gotten to know particularly well ended up with me in the 387th Squadron. They allowed us to fly some training missions to get familiar with the area and to be familiar with the airplane.

I remember the first time we did that—our proficiency had deteriorated a great deal in those three months. We didn't have a whole lot of flying time behind us. Let's say a guy had two or three thousand hours [flight time], you could lay off for two or three months and the transition back wouldn't be any problem. But for us it was. We almost all had some kind of a problem in that initial flight. I don't really remember how many of those training flights we had—not very many—before we started flying combat.

My first mission was the 14 of December. It turned out to be good weather and pretty much of a milk run. We did some dive bombing, but all I really remember about that mission was thinking, "OK, this is the first member of the family that's come back from Germany, and he's carrying bombs," and, also, flying with a great deal of concentration on my leader rather than anything else. I couldn't have told you where I had been at the end of this mission because all I had done, really, was look at that leader and . . .

You went through three months of transition going from one place to the next knowing that somewhere you were going to be flying in combat. How did you feel going through that time? Did it go well?

Well, I know we didn't like it. I think that we all knew that we were losing our proficiency. Flying generally is like that; the more you do of it, the more you want to do of it. But when you have a few days off—I'm just giving my opinion on this, of course—you don't really have the urge as strongly. But we really were very non-proficient when we finally did get back in the airplane. I think my thinking as I broke ground for that first time after three months was, "What am I doing in this thing?" I think we all had trouble getting back off the ground. One of the guys went off of the runway. I'd made a go around and almost hit him. So that was a little bit fun.

And the experienced pilots said, "Oh my god! What did they send us?"

Yes. [laughter] We were supposed to be in a formation. I remember we could just barely see each other. We were spread out all over the sky. But we picked it up again fairly fast, I'm sure. I don't recall any feeling like that again after that first trip.

What did you feel about war at that point? Did you have an anger, a dislike? Was there a disassociation?

Disassociation . . . ?

Because airplanes can be pretty remote from the ground and the real . . .

Yes. Looking back on it, I've said this many times, that they made a mistake in

our training by not ever having us on the ground watching the results of what we were doing. An .85 caliber machine gun [fires] 750 rounds a minute. The best example I can give you We were sometimes controlled from the ground. The ground controller would say we want you to do such and such. In this case it was tanks that they wanted us to hit. I think we had already dropped our bombs and so we went in and strafed these tanks. At the end of the mission, our leader claimed that we had probably damaged half a dozen or something like that but I don't think we claimed any destroyed. They were just sitting there. They didn't burn. They didn't blow up. You couldn't really tell what you were doing, if anything. Our impression was we hadn't done a whole lot. Well, the ground commander of the unit that was trying to attack these tanks, called our commander that night and said, "Hey, wonderful, thanks for a great . . . you knocked out twelve of those guys." We had never been shown what the destructive power of the weapon was.

Did you ever get the opportunity, later on, to see?

No, I never did, but one of the guys that I'd meet occasionally at some of our pilot reunions became a prisoner and was strafed by P-47's. He said it was the most horrible experience he ever had. So he knew what it was like, but none of us did.

How many missions did you have?

Fifty-eight.

And you started in November of 1944?

Well, my first mission was in December, two days before the Bulge.

So you must have been flying a mission every three days or so?

Well, I think on some days I flew three missions. But, on the average, it would be one mission a day whenever you flew. And weather would keep you on the ground. Once in a while you'd get a pass to go to Paris.

You flew a lot of missions. Every time you come back, do you assess how many people have been injured and are shot down and do you start to think about . . . ?

Well, they had advised us to go to this unit. They did us a huge favor because the unit you were with had a certain area of responsibility. We were in the 9th TAC; TAC is an administrative organization over all of these groups. And the 9th TAC were supporting Patton, I believe, the 3rd Army. After the Bulge they moved us down to Metz, France and we were in 19th TAC down there and supporting a different Army. At the time, we didn't picture it all. We didn't know what units we were supporting. We hardly knew the guys in the other squadrons in our group, for example.

All you ever knew about was the daily briefings and specifically, where you were going. Anything other than that, the big picture, you didn't have a clue. Was that frustrating?

The picture that we understood was three meals a day, your sack—that's where you had your refuge—very important, mail from home, and surviving from one day to the next.

Did you get a shot of whiskey or something when you finished the flights?

Theoretically, I didn't drink. I still don't. The rule in our outfit was that you didn't.

Most people didn't want it at the end of a trip. They just let it accumulate and then ultimately, [would] get a bottle, you know, that sort of thing. We would get a chocolate bar and a doughnut, perhaps, when we came back. [laughter] When you were briefed to go on a mission, they would take all your significant papers away from you and so forth. You'd have your dog tags and that was about it as far as identification. They'd give you an escape kit. When you got back, you'd give them the escape kit and they would give you your stuff back, and they'd give you the candy bar for being a good boy and going out there. [laughter] I thought it was kind of funny.

Still, I'm still curious about your feelings about the war and about the Germans and about who were you fighting. What are your feeling from your level? It could be abstract; you don't see the people at the other side.

That's right. It's all very abstract. One mission I recall that I did not go on. There was snow on the ground. One of the targets was a barracks out in the middle of an open space. There was snow all the way around these barracks and the Germans were running out. They were very visible on this snow. One of the guys that I used to fly with quite a bit came back from that mission and he was very quiet. It was the first time he could see what he was doing and he didn't really like it.

Did you talk amongst yourselves about the war and about the danger? Or did you talk about girlfriends?

Girlfriends. We used to play hearts; that was the standard game. The dead time, waiting for a mission, just before you went, was always the most nervous time. On the actual mission, there was so much to do you

don't think too much about danger. I can only recall one time when I could feel myself being afraid. I don't know why; it just was a passing wave of anxiety this one time.

When I asked you about being shot down, you said you were lucky to be with this group. So I'm assuming you didn't get a lot of anti-aircraft?

We had a lot of anti-aircraft. Look, the rule of thumb, which was made clear to us early on, was that until you had fifteen missions, you are not a good risk. And that's the way it worked out. Most the losses were among people like myself. As I told you, there were twelve of us that went into that group in the fall, and seven of us survived. And the ones that didn't come back, I'd say most of them were well under fifteen missions when they got hit. And why this should be, I don't know, because flack is pretty indiscriminate and so on. They gave us the worst airplanes initially; the ones that had the most time on them and, in some cases, less fuel capacity than the newer airplanes. I had one mission like that where the leader got lost. By the time he called for radio direction—a steer down to the base—we had to make almost a 180 degree turn; 140 degrees I guess what it was. Just about the time I completed the turn, my fuel warning light came on. All these other guys had more fuel capacity than I did because they had newer airplanes. I called the leader and he said, "Hang in there, buddy," or something like that, you know. [laughter] I was betwixt and between for approximately fifteen minutes, trying to make up my mind about whether I'm going to bail or whether I was going to crash land. The airplane was very good for crash landing and I always wanted to do it. If you had your shoulder harness locked and so forth, you could crash land through a brick building and have a pretty good chance of coming out of it alive. The airplane was wonderful in that respect.

So what did you do?

I made it . . . just barely. I got on the ground and taxied. I don't remember what was left, but it wasn't much. I was the first one to land, I can tell you that. I didn't wait for any clearance from anybody. I got the heck out of there.

So after the fifteenth, the more missions you had, the more secure you felt, rather than the other way around?

Yes. You didn't feel like the numbers were catching up on you—at least I didn't. Guys would flee . . . we didn't have a really fun tour there. When you made a hundred missions, the chances of your going home on leave were excellent. And whether or not you came back, I guess that was up to the individual. But a lot of guys did do that. The old guys, when they came back, they had trouble on their early missions; they probably had second thoughts about coming back . . . it was stretching your luck. My dad gave me some advice before I went overseas: "Don't volunteer for anything and don't come back with any medals." I would have been reluctant, I think, to volunteer to come back. But the war ended, fortunately.

Where were you when the war ended?

In Germany. We were in what was called Tactical Air Forces. You're basically out there to help the ground troops. They try to keep us as close to our targets as possible and that meant moving about every month. So we made a lot of moves over there. [We were in] initially, Belgium, then France, then back to Belgium to a different base, and then finally into Germany on the Cologne Plain, west of Cologne. We were the first American outfit to actually fly off of German soil. The PR

guy would send his reports out about how we were, "striking the Reich from within the Reich, daily." Sounds like being in somebody's belly or something. [laughter]

Our group commander, by the way, was an All-American halfback at West Point named Ray J. Sticker. He was a golden boy. He looked like you were supposed to look; a handsome man. He had a lot of contacts in the right places. And it could be—nobody else thinks so—but it could be that the target area in which we worked, which was safer than some of the others by far, could have been the result of his political connections. For example, Clare B. Luce used to drop by once in a while and, theoretically, had a crush on him. Mrs. Hemingway was by a number of times. Her name was Martha Gellhorn and she was writing for *Collier's* at that time. These people knew him. So it was obvious that he had the right connections.

The difference in your odds depended upon where you were working in Germany. A friend of mine from my same overseas shipment ended up with more missions than I did, by perhaps twenty. But more importantly, he ended up in positions of higher responsibility much, much earlier than any of us did. Most of us were actually wingmen until almost the end of the war, whereas he ended up as a flight leader in almost no [time], and then I think he actually led squadron missions before the war ended. In other words, they had a lot of losses that we didn't have.

You guys stayed as a wing. That was the basic unit out there?

Yes, it was. You had this kind of a formation. Here's your element leader and here's your wing man. And then the leader of the flight would be out here and he'd have a wingman, [It's] called a "finger-four formation."

How did you feel when the war ended?

We were in Germany when the war ended. It was the first time we were treated like heroes, I think, when flew into that base to occupy it. There were a bunch of prisoners of war, displaced persons, and whatnot that were on the base and they gathered around the airplanes, clapping and so forth. It made you feel pretty good.

We stayed there when the war ended. The actual ending of the war was sort of a let down in a way. Of course the Japanese thing was slowly going and, theoretically, we were supposed to maintain our proficiency and go back to the States, get into airplanes and go to Japan. That was the thinking. But nevertheless, when the war in Europe ended it was sort of like the end of a play or something. A little bit of a let down, you know.

We did routine training and flew every morning pretty consistently. Once in a while we would get a chance to get an airplane and go fly and see somebody at a different base, which was fun. You spent the afternoons usually lying around in the sun, doing your laundry, or whatever. Fraternization was still prohibited. Contact with the Germans was next to none. And we started back, probably about a month after the war ended . . . maybe six weeks after.

About June or so?

No, it was later than that. We were there all June. It was probably July before we started to move back. And again, it was a long process. [We were sent to], initially, a reception center near Reims, France, at an old World War I battlefield. The trenches were still there and cartridge cases and whatnot. We were in tents there.

I'd acquired a French girlfriend by this time. Well, by this time I was engaged, also, to the girl back home. [laughter] Just before I

left on that last leave, my mother said, "Don't think you ought to leave Lucy with something besides a fraternity pin?"

And I thought, "Well, why not? I'm not coming back anyway." So we got a ring and got engaged and all that stuff. I wasn't real faithful.

To me, it was very romantic. I met this girl in Paris in April and it reminded me of a movie from World War I called *Lilac Time*. It was a fighter theme from World War I; those are my favorite movies. The girl in that movie, I think her name was Janine, and this one that I ran into on a bridge in Paris was named Janine. [laughter]. She went out with me. Her uncle and her father had to go with us the first time. A walk in the park kind of thing; that was our first date. Then it was all over because I was told this kid from northern Wisconsin didn't know up from down. [laughter] But we corresponded after the war for a long time.

I went AWOL at this reception center. We had flown back there and got there probably four or five days before the ground personnel arrived by train or whatever. We'd just sit around in these tents. They wouldn't give us an official pass. This kid from Detroit and I were in the same little tent and one afternoon we were just b.s.ing, you know. I said something like, "You know, if I had some rations, I'd put them in my little rucksack and take off and see my girlfriend in Paris."

He said, "You know if I had a little rucksack, I'd do the same thing. I've got some rations."

We were just talking back and forth, you know. And pretty soon, we're packing and we've got our little bags. I know that I wasn't convinced that I was going to do this. But we ended up walking over to the nearest road and started to hitchhike. The next thing we know, we're in Paris. Both of us were AWOL for about three days and they never missed us.

And you and Janine walked in the park?

Yes. [laughter] We went to a movie. She came over to see me a few years ago, by the way—we're still in touch. She's still a good looking girl.

Had you seen her since then?

No. I was always going to go back. I was going to go over there and get a master's in forestry after the war. By that time, Lucy and I had broken up. And I thought, "Jeez . . . I was just in love with Paris." It was so romantic, you know; April in Paris, lilacs, Janine . . . just great. I hated big cities, but to me Paris was absolutely special.

I get back to the states, get separated, and was home for a while, driving my mother nuts. She said I should be doing something active. I was going back to school, but I was waiting for the spring term. I went back [to the States] just like everybody wanted to do.

Incidentally, when the war ended there was this big mass hysteria or something. You'd go home to mom's apple pie. They offered us the opportunity to stay there in the occupation and even to send us to college to places like the Sorbonne, trying to get these universities sort of subsidized and reopened. This kid from Little Rock, named Cox, and I used to sit there and talk about that. We were both kind of academic types, I guess. The mass impetus to go home was so strong.

The best example was a guy that came into our group to go home with us. His group was going to stay over there in the occupation, but he had a lot of combat points so he could go home with us. This kid was an orphan. He didn't have one relative in the United States of America. He didn't have a girlfriend in the United States of America. In contrast to that, he had this beautiful Belgian gal who was

multi-lingual and wealthy; her father owned a bunch of motels in Brussels. And he didn't make up his mind to go home or not to go home—home being nothing as far as he was concerned—until two days before we were given the word: "This is your last chance to stay over here." He didn't make up his mind until then to stay. I didn't keep track of him, unfortunately, so I don't know what happened.

How did you feel when you got back?

I was lost. You had a distinct objective for so many years, and then it was gone.

Plus, in my mind, you had some status as pilots.

Oh, yes. You know, a ground officer who was several ranks ahead of you was nothing because he wasn't a fighter pilot. If you were a fighter pilot, then that was the ultimate.

What kind of excitement is there taking forestry at some university?

Yes. Nothing could equate with being a fighter pilot. My buddy, Phil, went on to become a very successful surgeon in Florida. He was president of the Florida Surgeon's Society or something at one point in his career. But I'm sure that the high point of his life was the same as it was for me . . . being a fighter pilot. Going through the flight training and achieving that status was a wonderful experience. I don't know that we will ever get rid of that idea that the fighter pilot is the epitome. How could you work in an office or do anything that compares to that? If you had really high standards and really wanted to help humanity, probably being a doctor will give you more satisfaction. But for most of us that was that. It is a shame to have it at such a young age. I was twenty-two when the war ended.

How did you feel when the bomb dropped?

Very uneasy. I didn't like it. It was obviously a different kind of war all of a sudden. I didn't like that. When people talk about the last war, "the war worth fighting" or something like that, I guess I saw what it was like. I never regretted it. I was recalled in 1948.

I got unhappy with forestry. My first job was basically cruising and marking. My boss was a forester, but he wasn't college trained. And when he got drunk, he would confide in me rather succinctly what he thought of college trained foresters. So it was not a happy situation.

I kept trying to do something else. My real target was [to get a] flying job in forestry. Those were offered in Canada and I came very close to getting one and then they changed the rules and kept it for Canadian citizens only.

So I started putting in for a recall into the Air Force. Heck, I was well trained to be anything on an airplane, anyplace. I never tried seriously to become a commercial pilot because that was beneath me as a fighter pilot; rolling people around on a big airplane. I didn't want to do that.

I finally got fed up with my boss and this forestry job. It was supposed to be a good job. However, I felt that this was a great opportunity. So I figured, heck, I spent four and a half years doing something that I never really liked. I decided, heck, I'll try to get into the park service, which was again back to Bob Flame, ranger, you know. He had been a park ranger, which was considered sub-professional at Michigan as sort of being a chiropractor [compared] to medical school. So I put in for that and got a temporary job at Shenandoah National Park for about a month. Then they put me on permanent. It was great. It gave me a lot of responsibility. I was on my own pretty much.

Another girl pops up named Julie Bell, a little southern beauty, you know. I got really fond of her. So when the recall finally came through, I'd forgotten all about it. I wasn't interested in being recalled at that point with Julie Bell and this nice job. But I was keeping track of what was going on and I thought if I turned it down and refused to be recalled, that something in my career might happen and then I might get called back as a PFC or something. I didn't want to give up my commission. I got recalled and finished off twenty years in the Air Force; a lot of the time as a flight instructor. I never got back into fighters.

I got checked out in jets, T-33's and F-80's, and never really liked that as much as a P-47; they weren't quite the same—more limitations on what you could do; more procedures; more complicated; simpler to fly. Pre-flight took half an hour or so before you got in the airplane. For a P-47, [it took] about one minute and you were gone.

Was that a magical time that was impossible to recapture no matter what you did afterwards in your life?

Yes. It was a magical time. I corresponded with a guy from my outfit that had stayed on active duty right through. I wrote him to find out how he liked it. He said it's not the same and that he didn't like it as much. He stayed on for the full thirty, made a full career out of it. So it was, as you said, a magic time.

It's become pretty obvious to me that most of the men of your generation have a great deal of pride in what their generation accomplished. Do you have a sense of pride about your generation?

Oh, yes, very definitely. Well, we grew up with heroes, you know: movie heroes, baseball

heroes, football heroes. And we grew up with a lot of patriotism on holidays: parades on Memorial day, and visits to the cemetery. The flag meant a lot. I have been to the Air Force academy on two different occasions for tours, and I always asked the tour leader, privately when I got a chance, where the best cadets come from. [They said] small towns in the Midwest. And the worst ones, California. Those kids come in thinking they knew it all and a lot of the patriotism, I guess, is less than what they get from the Midwest.

Something else that I've only recently begun to think about, and that's the fact that the war seems to have been, for America only, a man's war. The men were all separated from society. The people that stayed went on with their life. The men that came back didn't attach very well to that world that had continued without them. It was very difficult for them to come back, for whatever reason this is—one was [because of what] they had experienced, but the other was they had been replaced in every sense. The world had just gone on without them.

Two things happened to me when I got home that are very strong in my mind. In one case, I guess I was getting on the train to go back to Ann Arbor. I know I was carrying a B-4 bag, a standard military suitcase. One of my dad's friends happened to be on the train with me and he asked what I had been doing the last few years. He did not know that I had been a fighter pilot. He didn't know I had been in the war. [laughter] I was insulted.

The other thing that happened, one afternoon Lucy and I were having a Sunday drive during this period before I went back to college. A little subdivision—it was the beginning of subdivisions—had popped up in this town where we were driving around. And she looked in one of these little homes and she said, "Gee! How can people live in something like that?"

She was raised in a big house like I was, three stories or something as they all were in those days.

She said, "How can people live in something like that? It's awfully small."

She doesn't know what the essentials of life are and I do. That's something I got out of the war. Philosophically, I thought that if I did survive the war by accident, that I would come back much more mature. I didn't feel more mature, but I did know what the essentials of life were, as this pointed out for me.

My bunch of kids in high school, I think we were all raised in a very sheltered manner. [We were all] very naive, and very late to mature. We all got married fairly late. I think I was thirty. And some of my buddies never did get married until after that. Very few of the ones that I was close to were married before that.

We had tremendous losses in my hometown. In my own neighborhood, it seemed like every family, except our's, had lost somebody, or in some cases more than one . . . all within a couple of blocks, you know.

Going back in the Air Force for me was good. I got a raise . . . it doubled my salary. I felt a little guilty about leaving my profession, but on the other hand I ended up with two professions, you know. I was a fighter pilot and I was also a forester. The glamour of being a fighter pilot was pretty strong. I maintained that specialty right up until I retired, but never actually got back into a fighter outfit for one reason or another.

I tried. I tried real hard. When I was first recalled, I had an assignment in Labrador and I was up there when the second bunch of fighters to fly the Atlantic came through to be ferried over there. The fellow leading was Colonel Schilling, one of the great aces of World War II from a P-47 outfit in the 8th Air Force. I got a chance to meet him and tell him how I felt about being assigned up there.

FREDRICK E. NELSON

Victoria Ford: Fred, let's start with a little bit of your background. You are a native of California, is that right? Can you tell me when you were born and a little bit about your parents?

Fredrick E. Nelson: I was born at Old Reed Ranch, just out of Healdsburg, California, in 1923. My father was a son of an engineer. He had four brothers and two sisters. He was just an old farmhand.

So he worked for different farmers in the area?

Yes.

What did your mom do?

My mother was a housewife. She worked the fruit [harvest] in the summertime, but she was strictly a housewife. Well, in those days, you could do it. Kids from high school did it. That's the reason why I can't see why they have so much trouble with labor. Why don't

they let the high school kids make a little bit of money by going out and harvesting fruit, vegetables and so forth?

You did that when you were in high school?

I started when I was in eighth grade, I guess. I started working in the fruit.

When I first asked you about your family, you said you were a bad boy. What kind of memories do you have of your childhood and teenage years?

My brothers were five to six years older than I am. They got to do things. And here I was, six years younger, and I couldn't, so I was always getting in trouble. [laughter] So I would say, "Oh, I can't do that, my brother has to do it. Well, that's too heavy for me. They got to do it." You know how it is.

Were you the youngest?

Yes, I was.



FREDRICK E. NELSON,
U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS

And of course, we always grew vegetables. That was one of my chores, taking care of vegetables, chickens, and . . .

Did you live on a farm?

I lived on a peach ranch, that's what it was. I worked in the high school years. We used to harvest May wheat; they don't anymore. Then we went from the wheat to the peaches to the prunes to the rice and then to the beans. And it wasn't for the beans and the rice. I usually worked about six months, then [was] in school. And well, I used to like to chase the girls. I liked all of them.

Did you have a girlfriend in high school?

Oh, yes, two or three. And played all sports. We didn't have football, except until my senior year. We had six man football, not eleven man. I think the year I graduated, 125 students is all our school had, and about half of them were juniors, a year behind me. The average class, though, [for a] normal year would be between nineteen and twenty-one.

It was very small your senior year?

It was a county high school. It took in what they call south Sutter. That was Pleasant Grove, used to be called Gouge-eye, the Rego area; Nicolaus, Verona, East Nicolaus, and southwest to the southern county line, up next to Wheatland, and Rego, against the Sacramento County line. So it was all farming country. There wasn't too many people in those days. Now there's quite a few.

You must have been in high school during the Depression.

Oh, yes.

Did you notice the Depression?

Oh, sure. Everybody noticed the Depression.

What were you aware of in your family?

Well, actually, I think it was only once that we were really aware of the Depression in the sense that it was hurting the family. Otherwise, my dad always made enough money. He only got paid thirty cents an hour, but we had our house, which is usually included [as part of the wage]. We had to pay our own utilities; electricity. [We needed] wood, but we didn't have to buy the wood, we always managed to

get wood. But, I think in 1936, dad went to gas to cook and oil for heat. We had a place to raise our own vegetables and we had our own cow and had a place to raise her feed. We didn't have to buy feed for her, except for the beet pulp we used to buy.

So you always had food?

We always had food to eat. My mother always canned a lot of stuff every year. We had a lot of food available for her to can. We had about a half acre, I guess, that we put into vegetables and canned a lot. I remember Mom used to can about 140 quarts of tomatoes every year; [and she canned] corn, and string beans, and real old-fashioned succotash—not this lima beans, [but] real succotash. We hunted a lot. We ate a lot of frog legs. I don't get many frog legs now. We used to go out and get all the frogs we wanted. Like we used to go out on Sunday and we'd eat frogs all week. We used to do a lot of fishing.

There was only one time you were aware that the Depression was hurting your family?

Well, actually I should say twice. My dad worked for my uncle. Grandpa, when my dad's oldest brother came back from the service, saw that he got a piece of property. He fixed it so he could buy half of it with his ranch. And then of the other three boys, the youngest one, he got it because he was home when Grandpa died. But the oldest one got the chance. So anyhow, my dad went to work for him. We rented a piece, or leased it, from the Tohmas Company. We lived there, but there was no charge; it was just to keep the property up. It was thirty-two acres.

My dad and my uncle, every once in a while, would get in a fight. Dad quit. It

was late fall, I think. [I'm] pretty sure it was late fall, because they were working on the pears. Well, anyway, my dad had to go find someplace else to work. So he worked for a guy that used prisoners. Dad had to teach them how to plow and so forth. He said, "Now that isn't for me." So there was quite a little while there that Dad wasn't working; though he quit, or he quit the work over there.

In the spring, he went over to Philo. He went to work falling timber, because dad used to own a mill when him and my mother was first married. And he felled timber for Philbrook until, of course, the winter set in and he couldn't work. He came down with pneumonia and he was in the hospital, it was two months, I guess.

That was a hard time for your family?

There were three families living in this one big house. It was my two aunts and two uncles. There was one child in that mess. And then the five of us. And I think it had six bedrooms. Anyway, when Dad went to the hospital, my uncle couldn't work by himself. The other uncle had a job making split redwood down below, so he went down there. I stayed with my aunt and uncle. We had nothing but beans. I worked in the beans, and my last day pay was beans. I had received no money. I got a sack of pinto beans and a half a sack of black eyed peas. Mom wanted to know why the peas. I liked peas. Nobody else did, but I did. [laughter] So I had that sack of beans.

We had a bunch of shells. Ammunition was cheap in those days. So I killed pigeons, and I killed jackrabbits and I'd shoot a fish or salmon once in a while or something like that. We ate all right. I mean, we got by but it was a real, real, real tight time. We did get

a pigeon or two or something, you know. You didn't have meat every day.

You just had beans?

Those beans don't taste very good without pork. But we made it.

Tell me, when did you first become aware of the war going on over in Europe?

I'd say maybe 1939. I felt that we had to get into it sooner or later.

Had you graduated from high school?

No, I graduated in 1941.

You would have been a sophomore or so in high school?

When I was in school [I thought] that, "My dad's a farmer. I'm going to be a farmer." I wasn't worried about anything else, see.

So you didn't care much about school?

No, I just didn't do what I should have done in school, and I'm sorry for it because it made it rougher for me years later.

Did it?

Oh, yes. A lot of stuff that I could have learned in high school I should have known when I started going to work and going to college, especially in math. I used to be pretty good in math. I got the one bad habit: I forget things very easy. If I don't use them, don't utilize them, they just go in a corner someplace and they stay there and I can't get them out, until I start doing it again, and then it's slow coming [back].

You were about a sophomore in high school when you were aware of the war and pretty sure that we were going to be involved?

Yes. I felt pretty confident that we were going to be involved in a war, but still it just didn't worry me any.

Where were you when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor? Do you remember that day?

Do you want me to tell you?

Well, I don't know. [laughter] Is it too personal?

I was under age but I was big for my age. I got by. When I was fifteen, I could go in the bars. My brother was twenty-one and they'd always check his I.D. and they'd let him pass. Well, they figured [I was older than him]. Anyway, I was working for a company, White O Ranch out of Healdsburg, on a green chain, in a sawmill. We cut redwood timbers and fir timber and lumber. That Saturday a bunch of us decided to go down to a place called *The Rendezvous* down in Guerneville.

What was The Rendezvous?

It was a bar.

Yes?

They had a radio and we usually could dance and have a good time. The bar closed at two. We locked the doors and we just partied. The old bartender was a friend of ours. We all put in five dollars or something like that. For five dollars in that day, you could buy a lot of liquor. So we danced and just had a private party. We wasn't paying any attention to the time, because we had the blinds all shut off and everything was dark outside, you know.

I mean they couldn't see in. [Anyone] could hear us, but couldn't see us. And a news flash came on [about Pearl Harbor]. We were all in pretty good shape, and we all jumped in the car. I said that the recruiting office in San Rosa would be open. So we all jumped in the car and went up there to try to get in the Navy. They wouldn't take a darned one of us because we were in too bad of shape. [laughter] But the next day, a lot of them went back. My cousin finally ended up in the Navy. I think he went in two or four weeks after I did.

Did your brothers sign up then?

My brothers were already in, one of them in June, 1940. The other went in June in 1941.

And you weren't old enough?

No, the draft hadn't hit me yet. I went and told my boss I quit and I was going in the service. I hitchhiked down to where my brothers were at Moffett Field. And then they wouldn't take me. I had to have my papers signed. So I had to hitchhike back home and my mother wouldn't sign it. "I got two boys in there, I don't want no three."

I said, "Well, I'm going to go in Mom, one way or another."

So she didn't approve of this?

No. Well, she figured two boys was enough. I said, "Well, I'm going to get drafted, anyway."

She said, "Well, then wait until you get drafted."

I said, "No, then I don't get to go where I want to go."

What did your dad say?

Dad said, "Well, if you want to go, you can go."

So, anyhow, I finally got them to sign it. It was the twentieth before I could get back down to San Diego. I went in to enlist. It was the same outfit that Jimmy Stewart was in.

Did you see him? Were you around him?

Oh, yes, a few times. My brother used to see him quite a bit.

Was he pretty famous even then?

Oh, yes.

So you enlisted and then what happened? You were at Moffett Field when you enlisted. Did you stay there?

I was there a week. There were eight of us, I think, and we went to the city of Monterey. Then we took our battery tests and we got all of our shots.

What was your reaction to the military when you got there?

Well, I had been around my brothers enough that I knew what to expect. And also I belonged to the California State Guard at that time. Because I enlisted without notifying them, the Guard gave me a dishonorable discharge and all this stuff. Well, my uncle was a good friend of the commander. He said, "Well, hell, he went down and enlisted in the service. He wasn't about to run up here and tell you. He was going to do something now."

Oh, we did pull KP. I had my first taste of KP.

What did you think of that?

Well, the job I got was night KP. They set three big cases of eggs in front of you and they gave you one of these great big bowls. But anyway, I had to crack those eggs for scrambled eggs for breakfast. There was three of us. Well, the first case, we did pretty good. We got the shells out and we was careful with it. The second case, if the shell was big, we'd get it out. By the time we got to the third case [it was], "The heck with it." [laughter] So I wouldn't eat scrambled eggs for breakfast.

Because you knew what was in them?
[laughter]

We had all them eggs, you know, and then they'd get us to do something [else] and they didn't let you go wash your hands and anything else and go back. You maybe went and washed the pots and pans, and if you had soap on your hands, that's all right, go ahead and go start cracking eggs again. It took quite a while before I could eat fresh eggs in the service, scrambled eggs, especially.

What else do you remember from those basic training days?

I remember guys falling down the wall when they was getting their Wassermann tests. That's where they take the blood out and check it for different things.

And guys would faint?

Oh, yes. They'd see somebody there pulling the blood out. The needle that was this big around, [and] down all the way it'd go.

We did have a little leisure time. We didn't have too much. But then I think I remember on Sunday, families would come up and visit a lot of people who were local around

there. Of course, there were quite a few of us sitting there. It was a whole trainload of us all together. It was all the Air Corps.

So your family could visit? Did they visit you?

Mine didn't, no, because they were way up north.

And I did guard duty for convoys. Then I was sent to Shepherd Field in Wichita Falls, Texas.

There was something I asked one of the guys, and they could never answer. I went through all the states, of course, into Texas. And I've heard people say, "Oh, how beautiful my state is." I have never figured out, yet, why it is they cut the boundary lines at the pretty part, but the next state picks up at the bad part. Because always the eastern end of the state is beautiful. Well, you take California going to Arizona, and you come to Nevada. The first part of Nevada is pretty, but then it's "Phhew!" until you get out on the east side. Well, a lot of the east side is pretty nice. But you go get into Utah, the east side of Utah is pretty. And you go into Colorado, well, about the same thing. The east side New Mexico is beautiful. Texas, get into the west side, oh man, that's horrible stuff. Then you go into the east side and it's pretty nice.

So you liked where you were when you arrived there? It was pretty?

Well, I didn't like what I saw of Texas. I stopped at the Panhandle.

You didn't like it?

No. That's the only place in my life I've seen four inches of snow on the ground and the dust blow.

All at the same time?

Yes.

So what happened at Wichita Falls? Was that advanced training for you?

That was basic.

So your time in Monterey was more of a holding time?

That's right. I spent weeks in basic training. They shipped me out to Hammer Field, in Fresno, and I spent two weeks there. The only reason why I spent two weeks there was because we were quarantined with measles.

Did you have the measles?

No. I'd had them when I was a kid. If anybody had them we were quarantined.

Then I was supposed to work out on the A-20. I don't know if you've ever heard of an A-20 aircraft or not, but it's something like these A-26s they used during the Korean war and the B-26s that they used in World War II. The English liked them real well because they were built for low, low weather. And they used them for skip bombing. They were fast. They couldn't carry much; I think 2,000 pounds was the maximum weight you could carry. But they also had guns on the front. We didn't use them because they were built strictly for low level.

[And I worked on] the B-25 and B-26, which they used in Europe, mainly. We tried the B-26 in the South Pacific, but our runways were too short for them. They landed too hot and they had trouble with them. We had steel for runways. And they landed, I think it was 150, 160 miles an hour, and that was pretty fast.

So you were working on the A-20s then?

Well, that was what I was supposed to do. I was there two weeks, and they loaded us on a bus and shipped us to Kern County, Bakersfield, California. We got there, put our tents up, drew our blankets, and just started to get things set, and here they come and they say, "Turn your cots and blankets in. Tear down your tent. Roll it." So we did. They put us on the bus and sent us to San Bernardino, to Morrow Field, Morrow Aircraft Plant. It was called Morrow Field in them days; latter it became Norton Air Force Base. That was a long stay there. I was classified as a truck driver in them days.

You were trained when you were in Texas?

No. I drove a truck as a kid all the time, you know. So they asked me what I did and I told them I drove a truck.

Well, anyway, I was at the 102nd Observation Squadron at Morrow Field. That outfit was the Air National Guard from New York. There was three squadrons. They flew was old 52's and old 47's, and 46's. It was strictly area observation for artilleries in that squad.

They were flying reconnaissance?

Yes. That was just strictly operative.

Anyhow, we had an old first sergeant that had twenty-nine years of service. He was in a cavalry [regiment], one that was dismounted. And where did they send him? To be First Sergeant, 102nd Observation Squad. He says that we didn't have enough basic. So he proceeded to give us instruction in old cavalry, first sergeant, basic training. Oh, man! He was rough.

What was that like?

Well, he'd talk to the pilots. We'd be going out for practice. He was marching us along a circle of road, and the pilots, they'd come and make a pass at us. He'd say, "Hit the ditch!"

That's the reason why I don't like the modern military. When an old sergeant tells you to hit the ditch, you hit it. You didn't argue up and down and say, "Hey, there's rocks down there. There's mud down there." You hit the ditch. So we hit the ditch.

And then he'd chew you out for getting your uniform dirty. Oh, he would chew you out! Then he would say, "OK, now for punishment, you're going to have double time all the way back."

And we'd double time all the way back. You would react without fault; somebody said hit the ditch, you hit it, and then you'd look and see what was going on. Under combat, if you don't, somebody's going to get killed real quick. Not only him, but somebody else too, see. So, you react real fast.

So you really learned that under this fellow?

Yes. Then we had our pup tents and we had to learn how to put our pup tents together and how to sleep side by side. And [we had] target shooting all the time. We used to dry shoot. What they call a dry shoot, they'd have a guy stand up there and he'd put a point of the pencil [in the target] and he'd slide it in and pull it away. You try to hit the same spot. That, of course, is a little target. They'd go up and measure it, and that [pencil hole] would fit inside of a dime. If you'd miss, you had a half a hour out there after everybody else was going in to eat. And you learned to take all these small arms: your rifles, pistols, the .45's we had, and the tops of submachine guns, so you could take them and put them together blindfolded. You didn't dare drop a piece of it, because if you

did, then you spent two hours cleaning that thing, putting it back together, cleaning it, putting it back together. Things like that, well sure, to a lot of people that's crazy. But it isn't. It's to teach you to hang on to something. You don't drop it. Because [if] you're out there firing at somebody in combat somewhere and your gun jams on you or something, you got to take it apart and fix it. Well, if you dropped a piece of it, you might be in water and you're going to never find it. So you're sitting there with no gun.

That could mean your life.

Yes.

At the time, do you remember being angry about the training or did you understand?

Well, one thing about it, the sergeant never bothered us at night. If we could sneak out without getting caught, fine. Of course we was out of there in the night.

There was drinking, you said, but not heavy drinking.

Not what you'd call getting intoxicated. We couldn't afford it, to start out with. We were only getting twenty-one dollars a month in them days. I think it was six weeks or almost two months before I got paid when I first got in. Pay records didn't get to you. Anyway, early one night, we went on out. The girls used to drive us into the back gate and then we had to fix it [with] the guards. When we went on guard, we did the same thing. We'd be walking the wrong direction when they'd come through and let us off. They turned around and went back out the gate, and then they'd turn around and walk back, see. It was just a courtesy we all did. Anyway,

three of us was downtown one night, and we had passes, but they [were for] New York. Our outfit from New York just never made any new passes. They'd just use the old passes and they said New York.

So you're supposed to be on leave in New York?

Well, we were allowed to, as I said, sneak out. But we carried the passes with us. They gave us the passes. We weren't supposed to go out, but if we did we still had a pass. The three of us were walking, coming back. It was about eleven o'clock at night. And the MP's picked us up. And we argued, and we argued, and we argued. This was our pass. It says New York on it, but our outfit's from New York, and they just never made up new ones saying San Bernardino on it. They just use the same old passes. They took us back, called the sergeant on guard, and turned us in. Oh, man! Did we get it, that's for certain, for getting caught. [laughter]

It wasn't so much what you did, but it was for getting caught?

Well, we had to answer to the paperwork for that. [laughter]

What punishment did you get? Do you remember?

I think we had to dig a latrine. I'm pretty sure that was our punishment. That was right down in the middle of an old riverbed, and it was in the rock. We dug a six by six. I think it was ten feet deep. We were out there digging all day. We got it done, called the first sergeant, he comes out there, "You boys did a fine job!"

He had newspapers. We didn't pay any attention to him. He just tossed the paper in

there and we covered the hole up. Well, we had to dig the hole up and find out what the headlines was on that piece of paper.

"Be observant," he said, "be observant." He never did anything unless it was something to it.

Did you learn to respect him?

Oh yes. Always did.

Were you making friends? You said there were two others that went with you into town.

Well, they both got killed over in the South Pacific. They went overseas with me. They both got shot down. One was named Edwards and the other, his name was Jackson. I got to spend my twenty-first birthday with Jackson, though, down at Mackay.

Mackay was in Australia?

It was a winter resort. Sits up there around Proserpine by the park over in Queensland about halfway between Townsville and Darwin, I think.

Is that where you went after . . . ?

That's where we had R&R.

Well, let's go back to Norton. When you left there, where did you go?

I went to March Field, in March, 1942. That's in Riverside, California. That's an old, old . . . that's one of the oldest bases.

What were you doing there?

Well, I was a truck driver there. And digging slit trenches.

What are slit trenches?

Slots in the ground, six foot deep, three feet wide. It could be any length.

What were they used for?

You get into them when you get attacked. Foxhole was another name. The reason we call them slit trenches is because they were slick, and you could fall into them at night when you had too many beers, break a leg and anything else. It wasn't covered up or anything. Foxhole usually referred to something that's covered up. Slit trenches were open.

So that's the difference. How long were you there driving truck?

I was there from March to June.

June is when you went overseas?

Yes. We were stationed in Oakland at the International Harvester Building. I had to get on the beer truck. They used everything they had to fill the boat up. I was standing up all the way across to the San Francisco Pier. Then we got on the boat. We sailed from the harbor around four o'clock.

Did you know where you were going?

Oh yes, sure. We knew where our outfit was.

And they were located . . . ?

In New Guinea.

What was happening in New Guinea?

Well, that's when the Japs were still coming forward. That was about the time the battle of Guadalcanal started. I'm not exactly sure when Guadalcanal started, but I know the Japs were coming to Dobodura coming through the Kokoda Pass. They were infiltrating into the Port Moresby area. We were sent up there. MacArthur said, "No one will be taken off of New Guinea, period."

What does that mean?

Then we stay there; hell or high water we stay there.

OK.

They yanked us out of the Philippines because they couldn't do it. There was no way they could do it.

If the Japanese got over as far as New Guinea, Fort Moresby, then they had the whole thing controlled, and then [could] go right into Australia.

I see.

So there's no way you can get us off. So we just stayed there.

First you stopped in Australia, though.

Yes, we stopped there until everything was consolidated so that we could move. We couldn't move because they hadn't completed the equipment. They needed to set up the photo labs and stuff for New Guinea . . . they hadn't completed that. There was no sense in taking us until it was completed.

So what did you do in Australia while you were waiting?

Oh, it was just like any other base. I drove a truck and hauled people around. I used to haul a major around all the time, Major Polifka. And he's the one that started that was in fact the first fighter photograph outfit overseas. That's the forerunners of what we have here in town, the high rollers. General Hutchinson, at that time he was a major, wanted B-17s. Captain Polifka, [he wanted] photogrammetry. I don't know if you know what photogrammetry is?

No I don't. What is that?

That is aerial survey. One of them initiated and pushed for that type of surveillance. Proved that it's more accurate than ground surveys. It was more accurate than these lasers that they are using now.

And this is the group that you were working with, driving truck and hauling them around?

At March Field, we moved into Fourth Mapping. The next day I was at Eighth Photo. Next day I was at Fourth Mapping. The next day I was at Eighth Photo. They couldn't make up their mind. Polifka was back east arguing with them about using the P-38s for photoships. They were fast. They were very maneuverable as far as getting out of the way of a Zero attack. They could run from a Zero pretty good. They could not climb out, but they sure could outdive and outfly in level flight.

That's what the A Flight went over for, they flew this photoship. They not only photographed Japanese ships, but they also mapped all of New Guinea, Guadalcanal, the Marshall Islands, and all of those. When they went up and made a pass, they photographed fifty miles on each side at thirty thousand feet.

That was pretty important work.

Then they overlapped it. They made it just like a map, an aerial map.

Well, Polifka proved that he could be within two He did it out there in the middle of Texas. They put, I think it was an old automobile or old truck, and he photographed that at thirty-thousand feet. He didn't know where it was, but they had a pilot that flew over, and he went with the pilot.

He took the pictures?

No, he didn't. It was automatic. All the pilot used to do was press a little button and it took the picture.

Oh, OK.

Polifka came back, and if I remember right, he was two thousandths of one inch off from the exact position.

So he proved it was very accurate.

Well, yes.

Was this an exciting group to be with?

Oh yes. We used to go over and take pictures of the Japanese freighters. When the pictures came back after the composition lab got done, you could read the name of the ship.

In the photograph?

Flying thirty-thousand feet.

Were you still driving truck at this time?

Well, for six months.

And then what happened?

I was a crew chief in P-38.

And what does a crew chief do?

That is the guy in charge of keeping the ship going. I did mechanic work, you know. I was a farmer and all that stuff. It was nothing to being crew chief, just using your head.

Did you have any training in airplane mechanics?

Just what I learned on the line. I worked with the crew chief for about, oh, I'd say two months. Then they pulled him off to do something, so I took over.

Then you started going up with the planes, too?

No, I didn't.

This is all ground maintenance. OK.

We moved our camp area because we were set right along the strip, close to the revetment area. Bonn was on the strip, too. I don't know if you ever heard of Bonn or not?

No, I haven't.

He's the ace of aces. He shot down more Jap planes than any other pilot. He was stationed right there. He was killed in a Shooting Star, testing out a jet. They brought him back. It was thirty-seven Japanese Zeros he shot down.

Anyway, these hunter planes, they were after our planes. They were after his outfit. And they just did a bad job of bombing. This was something unusual for the Japs. They

don't know why they did, but they did. They sent 110 planes over after our Betty Bombers and Zero Fighters. There were Zeroes but they used deadly bombers, too. And they came down the strip all night.

Our planes were over here. Then we had a road that run through here like this. For some reason or another, I got right down through here. Down about two miles at the end of the strip there's a big hospital and they just plastered them. The bomb runner's late. In other words, the bombs were slowed down too much falling. I think they used a new type of bomb kit and it slowed [the bombs] down too much. When they came, they came off to that side. They just missed us. We all went down of course and a machine gun hit us.

What were you thinking when that happened?

Thinking? We didn't think of nothing. You were praying, that's all. Anyway, they dropped a bunch of incendiaries about that long, made out of three-quarter inch pipe. They dropped a whole bunch of those full of magnesium. They had little bits of something [on them that] wears off as it thaws and then the air heats the magnesium and sets it off. They got a whole bunch of those and hit a Caterpillar tractor, hit some planes, and everything else. Only one guy in our outfit got hit and he got hit in the arm.

Daisy Cutter was what they dropped on the B-25s. That was supposed to have hit both repair yards, not the B-25s. You could pick up shrapnel all around and maybe get cut by shrapnel slit into the soil.

What did you think of the war by now?

Well, you expected it.

Were you prepared for it?

We had the Japs. A couple of sea planes came over and bombed Townsville when I was there. And then we moved into Fort Moresby. We were a hundred miles out and got a call to stop because they were bombing Fort Moresby. We had to wait until they quit bombing before we could come in, so we were a day late getting in.

There was so much action going on around there.

You expected it. I mean, you accepted it. You didn't like it, but there's nothing you can do about it. Of course, there just has to be a bunch of us working hard around there at that time. We already had one covered slit trench. The rest were all open machine gun nests. So we crawled in the machine gun nest. They took out six B-25s right behind us. I think one of the 38s got a little pithole in it. The bombs missed our unit, but they sure got that hospital. So they moved the hospital and got it away from the strips. Moved the hospital down to where they called Three Mile.

Were there a lot of casualties or additional injuries from the hospital?

I don't remember too much. They knocked the bridge out across the river. We couldn't get across through to the hospital.

Was it a civilian hospital?

No.

It was a military hospital.

I know that they just plastered it.

Then you moved your tents. Where did you go from there?

Well, after they got the bridge, we moved back down towards town about three, four miles off of the strip. There was a ridge run between us and where the base was. We did that more or less for protection.

By now you're crew chief. What was your rank at this point?

Corporal. I went overseas as a corporal and came back as a corporal. I couldn't get promoted.

Why?

Because I was always giving everybody a bad time.

You were still the bad boy?

The old man would call me in a lot of times and chew me out. He'd have to put me on a week's KP for telling old banana nose I wasn't going to do something. And old banana nose would turn me in and I get a week's KP. I got taken off the promotion list.

Well, anyway, October of 1943, I transferred to the 345th Bomb Group as a radio operator. I was with that . . .

And you were still in New Guinea?

Yes.

So it was just a move right there.

It was down the Jackson Strip.

So you were a radio operator?

Yes, radio operator and . . .

What kind of training did they give you for that?

Oh, I went to radio school for four weeks, I think it was.

Where was your job as radio operator? Were you in the plane?

No, I worked on the ground in the communication center. We were following the infantry. As soon as they took an air strip, the bomb group would come in. We had B-25s.

They took the airstrip at Dobodura. I don't know if you heard about Dobodura, but that was a real bloody battle.

The Japanese captured it?

The Japanese captured it. The only way to get to Dobodura was from Melanie Bay; to come up the coast from Port Moresby and Kokoda Pass. The Japs had a lot of troops in that area because they figured on coming through that pass to Port Moresby. The 41st Division, I think it was, started coming up from down in the bay. They pulled us all back to Dobodura and [another town]. Then the 32nd Division went through the pass. When they finally got through I think the 41st only had about twenty people left. And I think that the 32nd had even less than that.

There were a lot of casualties.

Yes, an awful lot, but they took it. As soon as they took it, we started moving in. There were still snipers around. And we were there for about . . . let's see, was that in October or . . .

October of 1943 . . .

October, I went to the 345th. In March, we left Dobodura and went to Markham

Valley because they took Markham Valley and the strip there. We moved into Markham as soon as they took the strip. As soon as it was secured, the 5th Bomber Command come up. That must have been right at the end of the year or the beginning of the year. Some of the days don't mean anything.

Why?

There was too much that was happening. The [Kokoda] Pass [was] going on. I was trying to keep [track of] what was going on in Guadalcanal. I was trying to keep track of what was going on in other places. And then, also, sometimes you work twelve hour shifts. Dates don't mean too much to you.

It just all blended together in your memory, did it? Were you in danger all of that time, too?

Oh, sometimes.

Off and on?

Yes. We only had one guy go nuts on us in Markham, but I . . .

Describe that.

Well, he was a kid by the name of Aby. And we had a couple of guys that were atheist, [that] were plain mean. We had this Aby, he was Jewish way back, and a real nice kid. We all liked him. He went to the outhouse. Then an officer came down and he saw the officer, well, he got a little scared. The Japs were sneaking around, you know. Well, he came barreling back to the tent and he grabs his rifle and hollers at the guys. They all grab their rifles and away they headed. You only need to holler. You holler loud so you'll scare anybody out there. [There were], I guess,

about twenty guys hitting around out there. That officer come out of the outhouse and the guy stumbled. They were going to shoot him right then and there. The guy stopped. They took the gun away from him. And then of all things, Aby didn't have his Jewish Bible for some reason or another, or didn't know where it was or something. But he got the atheists to get a bible, a Christian bible, and read to him out of the Christian bible and . . .

So you could really tell that he was off?

Yes, he blew it. That's what they call the disease.

What would happen to somebody who blew it?

Well, they take him to the hospital and they have a place for him. They shipped him back.

Was that the only kid that you saw kind of lose it?

Oh, no. We got another one. It was a Jewish officer named Swartz. And we had been up through . . . I got to stop and think now. This is later on, because when I went to Markham Valley, I was assigned to the 5th Bomber Command. The idea of it was, they made up four com groups and the bomb groups were BombCom 1, BombCom2, BombCom3 and BombCom4. We had trouble with our planes. They had to have somebody correct bombing control on landings and stuff like that, so that you'd shoot the primary targets or secondaries.

And that's where you were assigned?

At first, yes. We worked at bomber command until we learned the procedure

that they wanted us to operate under. Then they broke us up into four teams. Team One stayed at the bomber command; they stayed with it all times. Team Two, Three, and Four, we went on landings. Our job was to go to the landings to control the aircraft that were flying around.

So you were handling radio communications?

Yes, I always had communications between the aircraft and the ground.

When they were landing where?

We were dealing with them when they were coming in.

You're talking about the 5th Bomber Command at Markham Valley, New Guinea, and you have a particular story there involving a major.

Yes, it was kind of funny. The group adjutant came in and he wanted to know if anybody knew how to build a septic tank. They just moved in and they wanted to build an officer's club. There was a big hospital behind us and, oh, I guess about thirty miles down the road. And I said, "Yes, I know how to build one of them." So I told them how to build it. And I didn't pay no more attention. I had something else on my mind.

The adjutant said, "Well, you go up and take care of it."

"I've got work to do. We're short-handed as it is."

He said, "Oh, no. We'll take care of that. You just go up there and show those gooks what to do."

Who were the gooks?

The natives.

And so I explained to him three or four times exactly how to do it and he said, "Well you go up there."

I said, "No, I got my work to do. That's the officers club. Let the officers supervise it. I can't go up there and get a drink or anything like that."

They said, "No, that's true."

It didn't take them long to get the club up. They had enough natives there that they put it up practically in no time at all. It took a week, maybe two.

Anyway, I was working one night, we were getting ready for strike the next day, and I was all by myself. I had to not only take the messages, I had to run them to the different squadron commands. I got a message over the radio that I could pass out by phone. I got that out. And then a major came in and he wanted to borrow the jeep. I told him, "No, we're expecting strike commands for tomorrow. I got a few up but I haven't got them all in yet."

And he says, "Well, I'll only be gone for a couple of hours. I'm going down to the hospital to get a nurse and then come back to the officer's club."

I said, "Sorry, you just can't use it." He was my boss. "You can't use it."

"Well, I've got to have it."

Anyhow, two days later, he says, "You're going over to the 5th Bomber Command and report to the com center."

I said, "OK."

I went over to 5th Bomber Command. I worked over there for about two weeks, I guess, out target shooting and getting requalified for weapons and so forth.

Did you realize what was happening?

No, I just didn't realize what was going on. I was the second oldest man in the outfit

and I was due to rotate back to the states. It seems to me it was around the 1 of June, right in that area someplace.

Anyway, we go over there and we get on the plane and we taxi down to the end of the strip and we'd get off the plane. We'd go out and we'd target shoot. We'd get back and get on a plane with all our gear. We had to have all of our gear—all of it. I had to hike, oh, I guess, about a mile. I had a pack. I'd take stuff back and forth because I had to stay in my outfit. Every day I was going out there and working up there. Every day I had to pack that stuff up there, and every night I'd pack it back. We worked a twelve hour shift.

And how much did it weigh?

Well, you can figure two duffle bags full of clothes and your extra stuff. I don't know what they both weighed together. I'd say pretty close to ninety pounds, maybe a hundred pounds.

Anyway, we went up there one day and same thing—we got on the plane with our guns and our ammunition and all of our stuff. We taxied down the strip, and off we went. I didn't find out where to locate my outfit again until first part of June, 1945.

What happened for that year in between?

Well we landed at Biak, by a valley, actually.

When you took off, was that the first you realized you were headed into combat?

Well, we knew we were going somewhere. We didn't know where we were going. So, we went the high way and there was still fighting there on the beach at Biak. But they had to take a valley and a strip yet. They took the

valley. And you've seen these war pictures that show the Navy bombing what looks like a burnt out ridge with firebombs? Well, that was just five miles from us. We could watch that. That's Biak. We were blocked down on the beach and couldn't get up to it until we got air support. Finally, the weather settled so they could get fighter aircraft, and bomber aircraft, in there to get a hole open to get up there. We'd get a raid once in a while at night, but they usually were after the strip. They weren't after us. Then we got orders.

Were you still doing radio communications?

Yes. I was working on individual aircraft. I was listening to the aircraft frequencies and I was taking messages. And 5th Bomber Command, they'd immediately see the message, so they would ask for a repeat, so I would repeat it. The aircraft didn't have to do that. Also we were taking weather. We had B-24s going up over the Philippines and we'd get these big, long, weather messages. I started taking those, which was intelligence circuit. Maybe I'd get a thousand word message come in, and then I'd have to repeat it. But I wouldn't repeat it to 5th Bomber Command, they would pick it up. I would send it directly down to MacArthur's command.

Did you memorize it? Did you write it down? How did you record the message?

Typewriter. [I typed] all the numbers, five letter number groups, all in code.

So, had this major sent you into battle?

Yes. Well, he sent me out. That was the Army. They could transfer me anyplace they wanted to.

But, did you figure it was because you made the major mad?

Well, yes. I don't know if he knew what it was all about either. They just told me they wanted a radio operator from each outfit. There was fifteen of us.

So, you were taking weather reports. You were taking intelligence reports.

We were assigned to a command. That's all it was. It didn't have an aircraft—not one aircraft. And of course we had Sigaba operators.

What is that?

The Sigaba was our secret code machine. I don't think they use it anymore. They got some other system. But it's what, basically, the Germans and the Japs used. The Japs, they learned how to break it. The Japanese broke Germany's. Ours, they never broke because of our knowledge.

But we broke theirs?

What you do is you send out a message. [With] Sigaba, the first two groups and the last two groups had to be exactly the same. That tells them how to set up this spinning wheel. They had five wheels and I told them how to set those five wheels so that the machine could translate them from code. Then you just type in a code and it comes back out, decoded. And we had what we call Bar P, which I don't think the Germans and the Japs used. That was a period normally. But in the code it could be anything. The period could be an "A," Bar P could be a "C." Then we used Recko, which used a Bar P also. That changed every day. That's what we controlled aircraft with.

I think I handled about five, I guess, of those weather message that came through. They went to Sydney, Australia, down to MacArthur's command. It was called Navy because that's where the Navy headquarters was. Mostly, the Navy [messages were] the ones they intercepted. Oh, once in a while we'd get an Aussie guy. We could tell because they have a round knob. They don't have a flat one like we do. They have a round knob and they grab it to go this way. Well, the girls, they used girls mostly down there in Brisbane, they'd send them off and they'd come over here and they'd have a string on it and they'd hang them on the string. Boy, they could really go. About twenty-one words a minute is about the best you could do by hand.

Is that telegraph?

It looks like a telegraph.

But those gals could run about twenty-four or twenty-five [words a minute] using that thing's string. I tried it. I couldn't do it. I used to use a bug you set up [and with that could do] about thirty-six words a minute. In fact, you had to pass thirty-two to work OIC—and that's receiving. You had to type about, oh, four groups behind all the time, four words behind. In other words, you got to keep track of what's [coming in while you're typing] and it's all code. But after you do it for a while it's just automatic.

You said that you have a good short term memory. That was real helpful in this kind of work. You had to remember things for a short period of time and then forget them and go on to the next thing.

Yes you did. You got so you could do the work. Some guys could get up to six or seven groups. Four or five is about my limit. You do

it that way because if you try to keep track, what you're pressing now, you're in trouble. But if you listen . . . Well, the best way to do it is to get drunk the night before, and then you don't give a dang what goes up there. [laughter]

You're on automatic then. [laughter]

Yes. Anyway, we did that there at Biak. We got bombed quite a few times; nothing serious. So we got a call in and we had to go back and get set for the next landing. I forget where in the heck Team Two or Four went to. We went to Biak.

We went back to Hollandia. And that's the only place of the tropics that I liked. It's not like here. [It was] hotter than hell during the daytime but at night it was cool. You slept good at night. Well, we were back there to get prepared for the next landing.

Were you having any time off during this business?

Well, we got our two weeks R&R out of Hollandia.

And where did you go?

Back to Brisbane.

What was that like? What did guys do on R&R?

Chase girls for one thing.

Did they want to be caught? [laughter]

We didn't have any problems with girls.

Did you get along with the Australians? Did they like the GIs?

Well, I guess so. I don't know. I guess they did. The only thing, Melbourne is a damn town. You don't want to go to Melbourne and walk around Melbourne.

Why is that?

Now, we were in pretty good [shape], we could move out, you know. Those guys, they come right on by just like you're standing still and ask you where you're going.

"I'm going home."

Why they walked so fast, I'll never know. Girls would go by you, and one would grab each arm and ask, "Where are you going?" You can't hardly keep up with them. I mean, that's the way they walked. But the rest of them wasn't so bad. Of course, you had to get used to their phrases. Like I asked a gal one time to dance and she says, "I don't know. I'm all knocked up. Go jazz with my sister."

"What the hell?"

A kid was alongside that had been there for quite a while. He said, "She's telling you she's tired. Ask her sister."

And all knocked up in America meant something else, right? [laughter]

That's right. But things like that, different phrases mean different things, too.

It was English but it just didn't translate exactly the same.

That's right.

But for the most part they were friendly with the GIs. They had dances and you were welcome at the dances.

You had to watch your buttons. Your buttons on your coat, boy, they'd steal those

buttons off, whew! You had to get a whole bunch of them. We had a little PX and they'd have clothing there. And we'd tell them, "Look what they did." They'd just laugh and hand you a handful of buttons. [laughter]

Why were they special? Was it like a souvenir?

I guess. I don't know.

Did the guys do a lot of drinking on R&R?

Well, you couldn't drink. It was hard to do. Now I bought a case of alcohol—a case of whiskey—from a taxi driver. I paid about thirty dollars a bottle for it. But I was going to be there for fourteen days and I was going to enjoy myself.

Were you there with friends?

There was two of us that stayed in the same tent.

You had been moved around quite a bit. Were you with any buddies now? Did you make buddies pretty fast wherever you went?

In your tent you make buddies pretty fast, you know. The way we worked, we just didn't have time to make too many friends. We worked twelve hour shifts; off twelve, on twelve, off twelve. When Sunday comes, we work twenty-four hours. Then we went back on in twelve hours. And then the next Sunday would come and we got twenty-four hours off.

When you went on R&R, there were some people that you knew?

Well, usually there's somebody with you.

What happened after your two weeks at Brisbane?

From Brisbane we returned to Hollandia. We were there for . . . Of course we were kind of shell shocked. We had been bombed a little bit.

What was it like to be shell shocked?

Well, any sudden noise would cause you, a lot of times, to dive, jump, or hide, or something.

Pretty jumpy . . .

Yes. Anyhow, we pulled into this place in Hollandia in a big coconut grove. I don't know who had it before we moved in there. We were going to get our equipment for the next landing. The big mess hall had a tin roof and then they had [the sides] built up about [waist high] out of a kind of slate. Then they had burlap hanging down so the air could circulate or something. Well, we got in there and—I guess I was just as guilty as the rest of them—the first coconut that hit that roof, did you ever see guys going outside of that building. And [when] the second one [hit] a few still ran out again. [It was] about the third or fourth before you get used to it and accepted it.

And this is even after R&R?

No, this is before R&R.

This is before you went on R&R. You're pretty jumpy. Did that get better while you were on R&R?

At certain times, a certain amount of noise would kind of make you stop and look and listen.

We had Dutch guilders. It was up at Biak and we all had Dutch guilders. The landing

belonged to Holland, too. I think we all chipped in the equivalent of oh, I guess, about five dollars, and sent a B-25 down to get us all a bottle of gin. There was no liquor for us, so the only liquor you get is what you make or what you could buy.

Buy or trade . . .

. . . or steal or whatever. [laughter] We stole a lot of Japanese liquor. We [found a] Japanese cache and we just helped ourselves. We'd tell the officers about it, but they'd give us lip.

Anyway, the plane came back. They got gin for the officers. They couldn't get enough, so they got rum. That is the most horrible tasting stuff that you ever did [drink]. [laughter] There's five of us in our tent. We had five bottles. And the next tent that we went in, they had five, and the next one. So we got to looking around, and we opened a bottle and boy, I'll tell you, that first drink, whew! The second one was much better. We, more or less, had been drinking a lot of coconut stuff. We [drank any] stuff that we could get ahold of; anything that had alcohol in it. We started buying bottles. The guys who didn't want them, that would rather have the money, we'd give them the equivalent of ten dollars, so they made a little bit. Boy, we had a big stack. And every night they would put us to bed.

Because everybody was drunk?

Yes. I had one atheist in that bunch. There really wasn't any Jewish boys in our tent. But I think there was one Latter Day Saint. Well, he got drinking worse than the rest of us.

So anyhow, we finally got R&R. We were almost the last bus to go. We had one bottle of that stuff left, we drank that going down.

We went to Brisbane, we got down there, and we were in good shape. We got off the plane and they put us on a bus and took us down where we had to sign in, register, tell them approximately where we were going to be staying, and stuff like that. The first thing we got were two quart bottles of good beer. Of course, we had been drinking quite a bit of Dutch beer that we had got out of these Japanese caches. We had to do something.

You had to do something—meaning . . . ?

You just couldn't work twelve and just sit for twelve, you know. You just couldn't do it. You had to do something.

And did the drinking kind of numb being under attack all the time or was it more for fun?

Well, I wouldn't say for fun. You could associate the things better. If you didn't, you'd get wound up too tight.

If you didn't drink?

If you didn't do something to loosen you up. Then when you got loosened up, then you would play cards with somebody or you'd play jokes on somebody like taking the hook from the old crank phones, tacking nails under the seat, putting wires to it and, "Hey! Lieutenant, sit down." And when the lieutenant sat down . . . Things like that, you know.

A little electric shock . . . ?

You'd get by with it. And we used to take coconuts . . . I used to climb all of the trees and did all of the antenna work. I used to pick green coconuts, come down and take my knife and make a slice in it like that, peel it back, put a cup of sugar in it, put the lid back on it,

and pretty soon they . . . Because you had to have something to do.

That's the reason why I think Aby went haywire. And I think that's the reason why Phil Woodsgone went haywire. Because he wanted his R&R before we did. I think he was a trip before me.

The R&R wasn't so bad. The first place we was at, while I was gone, they moved us. That was out on an old desert hill. God, there was nothing; not a desert tree; nothing. Where we were, we had a nice stream. We dammed it and we fixed it up into a swimming pool [for] when we didn't have nothing to do and we were just resting.

People would start to lose it because they just didn't have anything to do?

Well, Phil didn't drink. I don't think it was his religion or something, but he just didn't. I got some homemade muscatel—well I called it muscatel; hard telling what was in it—and he took one drink of that and that was it.

We got four truckloads of equipment in, I think it was. And then we got in a truckload of replacements for guys that we had lost. The lieutenant came out. Old Phil, he was PFC, Phil was, told them to get off the truck and line up. And he says "Who's got the roster?"

The lieutenant says "Phil, what the hell do you think you're doing?"

Phil looks at the lieutenant and he pulled out his knife and he says, "God willed me to kill the lieutenant."

The lieutenant was a short legged guy and old Phil was a big tall, lanky guy. And the officers were on the other side, down across the canyon. That's where the officer's quarters were.

And old Lt. Schwartz was heading down across that canyon, up the other side, and old Phil right behind him. "God willed me to kill Lieutenant Schwartz."

There was a field phone. We got down to the field phone and called over to the officers, and told them what the heck was going on. Now, that little lieutenant was going. Oh man, I mean those little, short legs, they were going, you know. [The officers] got Schwartz to go between two tents and there were four guys sitting on each side. And when ole Phil comes through after Schwartz, well, they jumped him.

We went down to see him the next day at the hospital. They put him in a nuts ward. He was mad. "What? I'm not nuts." [laughter]

He didn't know.

Let's say that just [some small thing] bust him loose. That's the reason why I say you had to have something to do.

Because if you didn't do a little bending, you'd snap?

That's right. You just couldn't tow the line straight through like that. You just couldn't do it. They show these guys in the movies drinking wine over there in Europe, you know. Well, we didn't have that kind of stuff. So, if they could get ahold of a bottle of wine, more power to them, you know. Because you just can't tow that line that tight that long. It just doesn't work.

Too much pressure . . .

It's different than Vietnam and the Korean War. The Korean War was a lot like the [Second World War in] Europe was, in a way. But Vietnam was a different type of a fighting. You had breaks in Vietnam. They had a chance to come back and get a little break. But over there in Europe, they started first over there, and they had no time for breaks or nothing.

And you just can't tow the line that steady that long without something.

Was this the only two week R&R that you got? You were there for a full year.

No. I think the first one was just before I was transferred to the 345th Bomb Group. Then I got another R&R when I was at 345th. Then I got this one for fourteen days.

So you got about three of them during that year period?

I got three R&Rs. I was over there three years, altogether.

But for the one year where you were really in intense combat . . .

I got that one from Hollandia. That's the last R&R I got.

We went down to Lea and got on the boat for Leyte, that was part of a big convoy. Then we headed for Leyte. There were three landings that just fell right in a row. One of them was Leyte, one was Mindoro, and the other one was Samar. We had Leyte, I think Team Two had Samar, and Team Four had Mindoro, I'm pretty sure.

Well, we got on LST's. And we set in harbor for three, four days. I'm not exactly sure, now. They all got loaded up and ready to go.

Was that a time to rest?

Well, yes. You rested there. You didn't have nothing to do except KP. At late night, you'd work KP or whatever that was. [laughter] We left Lea and headed for Leyte. We didn't know where we was going, but we knew we was heading for the Philippines. We knew

that because it was an awful big convoy. The convoy went ahead of us. I got to Leyte four days after D-Day. We went in at Samar. Leyte is a dark passage where the two islands come fairly close together. The Japs were sitting on either side of the borders. God, I'll tell you . . . they lobbed mortars . . . you couldn't see them . . . you couldn't hear them . . . they would just hit the water and go, "Ploomp!" The Japanese didn't hit anything with them, but they sure was having a lot of fun. That's where we also got jumped with the Japanese Zeroes.

Zeroes are . . . ?

They're Japanese fighter aircraft.

We got jumped with them. I don't know how many were there. There were quite a few that had come in. They were dropping bombs on us, too. And of course, the anti-aircraft was firing at them.

The first cavalry went in just before us. The original landing was at Tacloban. Four days later we ended up forty miles north of the Tacloban landing. It must have been because they wanted more room.

So our landing was a half day [latter]. We landed in the afternoon after the infantry, the 1st Cavalry, went in ahead of us. And there wasn't that many Japs up there. They were all heading down to the Tacloban area where the initial landing was. And so we had it fairly easy though there were a lot of land mines and stuff like that. We took the strip real quick.

I had seen aircraft plow into ships and stuff like that. In fact, there was a freighter alongside of us and it got it. It was a Jap that dove into it. And it bounced off and hit a LCI. Of course, it set that on fire. That was right next to us. We were on the outside [of the convoy]. I wish I was inside . . . well, no, I don't, because they got hit more than we did.

They had craft that they call the landing craft, infantry (LCI). They had side ramps on them that infantrymen could go out. When they got [to a landing], they'd drop the ramps and the infantry would go out. There weren't no vehicles . . . it was just all men. That was the reason why it was called infantry.

I see.

But I was sleep when we first went in there. It was hot. We were hot. Up at the front of the ship they had a forty millimeter Bofors gun; it's like a machine gun. I had a habit of crawling underneath that because it was cool. I'd get the breeze off the bow of the ship, you know. That protected me from the sun up above. I'd crawl under there and sleep. That's where I slept. God, they opened up on them Bofors and I banged my head and I dang near knocked myself out. I couldn't get out of there fast enough. Over top of me, that's all metal, and it was hard on my ears.

It was pretty loud.

Well, as I say, you do crazy things.

Well, it sounds like sleep was pretty precious.

Well, good sleep . . . yes. When I had nothing else to do on that ship, [I would sleep]. What was I going to do? We went and told tall stories with the guys or lost money playing poker.

Those were the choices for passing time?

That's about it. So I'd just crawl underneath the Bofors and sleep.

Yes.

We left on the 20 of June and we landed the 20 of July. That was thirty-one days because you'd count the day you'd start, too. The only thing you had to do going over there was play cards. You only had two meals a day. And the ship's so crowded you couldn't do anything else on it.

So you were in the Philippines four days after D-Day, landing?

Well, I meant to tell you, when we left Biak, 5th Bomber Command moved in. Wherever we went, BombCom Team 3, 5th Bomber Command followed us, except for to honor their dead. They moved in and everything was secure. So 5th Bomber Command flew to Leyte. They had everything all set up and they come fly in. When they flew in, we loaded our stuff we wanted to take with us on their planes, and they moved into our tents. We left everything else sitting there. That night they got clobbered.

Wow, you missed it by one day.

They got clobbered that night. [laughter] It wasn't secure as they thought it was.

It sounds like you would miss things by a day or an inch or . . . ?

Yes, [there were] a lot of things like that.

At Leyte we had paratroopers come in on us, ship paratroopers. I missed out on one of them beautiful carbines. I can remember the carbines those Jap paratroopers had. Oh, that was a beautiful gun. I missed out on it, dog-gone it, I didn't get one.

How did you miss out on it?

I just was in the wrong spot at the right time. But four or five came in one night. The old

hands on the runway got all five of them. I didn't get a carbine. I'd like to have had one of those.

What we handled was all of the command messages. When we got to Leyte, I was working one night and I got a repeat for some message. I was looking for it and all of a sudden, here this message came in just as plain as heck. I couldn't figure out who it was from. The call signals were kind of goofed so it was pretty hard to tell exactly what it was. Message comes through. It was just perfect, beautiful. Then when they signed off, it was kind of what we call QQQ; it's wipe the bird manure off the antenna. In other words, you wasn't exactly sure what you heard. Two or three days later, I got another important message that come in and it was going on through and they didn't receive it all. [It was about] the way the weather is and the curvature is and stuff like that . . . a repeat. Well, I'd let them repeat it. Heck, I didn't have to do the work. This went on, oh, I guess, for a week or so. I was talking to the other shifts and they were getting a lot of those, too. They were getting maybe four or five of them a shift. We were checked, all of us OCI, about every three months, to be sure they're all the same person. And they got in on it.

And the mayor's house, in the town that we were in, was up just above us, oh, I say, ten miles. In his attic was a Japanese. And that was what he was doing, transmitting messages. He was taking them up and he was changing frequency and he would ship them out. But while he was listening to ours, he would get into our circuit and play around and drive us nuts. And they finally caught up with him.

What happened to him?

I don't know. That was the least of my worries. They caught quite a few Japanese up in the attics and in the houses.

What happens after the Philippines?

I wasn't there very long. I think it was Christmas day we loaded. I know that we had turkey—canned turkey. We went to get the rations to put on the ship for the next landing. We had to go in this big depot, and when we went by we saw this stack of canned turkeys; a great big stack of it, you know. A row split . . . it was right in between the row. So when we saw that one of the guys jumped off and jumped up on top. So we went in, got the rations all filled up on what we had to get and where we had to get it. The guy would show us, you know, "Let's get this done." Then we got back out by the canned turkey, the guy jumps off with a couple of these turkeys, see. We hid that in our truck. So we had canned turkey. Ate canned turkey for quite a while. I finally got tired of canned turkey. But we ate canned turkey.

Well, anyway, we got on the boats. We was on a 1096, I think, or a 1092 LST. We loaded and backed out and another LST came right up in front of us; they had to come right into our spot because we hadn't built any ramps. When we got there, the ship captain gave us all two cans of beer. I was just enjoying that can of beer—oh, it was really good—when all of a sudden the sirens went off and about ten to fifteen Zeroes came over carrying bombs. They dropped a lot on the ship that replaced us. Dropped one right in front of the wheelhouse. It blew the bottom out. There was a thirty second delay fuse. The bomb went clear down to the bottom. And as far as I know, it's still sitting there because there's no sense in digging it out, you know. The LST just filled up with sand. And we had got out about six o'clock in the evening. That was midnight when they come over that night. Well, we weren't there; we went to hold out in the bay for a while.

Just missed you again?

Oh, yes.

Yes.

We left Leyte and went up to Luzon, to Lingayen; that's the landing on Luzon. We [crossed the] China Sea there. And them LST's are flat bottomed. They go up and they'd come over and they'd come down like that, "BOOM!" and you'd swear that thing would never hold together, but they did. They were good, little, steady ships. We were the lead ship going in. And we had a little frigate sitting over on the corner. I'd see the frigate sitting way up there, you know, and there would be fifteen minutes when I wouldn't see that thing again, but pretty soon here it'd come back up there again.

That's how big the waves were. Was it a hurricane?

Yes.

So anyhow, we found the infantry at Luzon. We went in right by them. That's where I hurt my neck and I guess caused the trouble with my back. I was up on top of one of the trucks with a bunch of equipment and cameras and stuff. I was trying to go to sleep. We pulled in and they didn't know where they wanted to send us. They didn't have it cleared yet. Right across the river [from Tacloban] is where we were camped. They hadn't taken that yet, so we had to wait until they took it so we could get in. So we were going to stay overnight. So we ate, were horsing around, and stuff like that. I went up on top of the truck to go to sleep because it was cooler up there. Just like any place else, the higher you get, the cooler it is for some reason. Anyway, I was underneath the coconut trees. They

were just unloading lights down at the beach. Everything was all lit up. We got our air raid siren and they shut the lights off. And just about then, they heard a plane coming over the top, you know. And it was just a single plane. It was like a Washing Machine Charlie; it was just to annoy you. That's mainly what it was for, see. Because you don't know who it is. Some damn fool turned the light on down at the beach. It wasn't maybe a quarter of a mile from us. They could miss by that far real easy. And I heard that plane. We were hollering like heck. I heard that Zero when they dropped a bomb. They had to go into a dive. Then they pulled up. Well, with the distance and so forth it [took] quite a little time. Well, I was up on top of that truck and I heard the, "uhhhh." Well, off I went. I was up there pretty high, about ten feet, I guess. I don't know. My heel went through that canvas and over I went. I hit right on my neck right down through this shoulder. And of course, I saw stars. I crawled right in between the duals of that truck. How I got in there, I don't know, because they had to dig me out . . . they couldn't pull me out. I got in between them two duals of that truck tire because I seen that explosion. It's just, if the bomb was to hit there, I was going to get underneath that wheel to get protection as much as I could. I did it subconsciously.

And oh, you talk about a stiff neck! I guess it must have been two weeks before I could turn my head. I went and seen the doctor about it. He said, "Well, you didn't break any bones. You're all right." But it hit here and I was pointing my shoulders. I dove right onto that, head first.

That's the injury that causes you problems still?

Yes. Plus, I think that's why I do have trouble with this shoulder. I had to quit playing baseball when I got about forty years

old; I couldn't throw a ball. So I think that's what caused that. Like I chipped the bones or something.

Well, they was having trouble at Tacloban. We were on the other side of kind of—it was a river going there real small and there was where the ocean was kind of like a little inlet. I don't know what you call it.

A little bay . . . ?

Yes. And that was pretty wide.

But Baguio was another place they had a lot of trouble. They asked a lot of us guys to take a three day leave and go up and help. It was a big resort. (In fact, one of our members of the 48th Legion here, a Filipino, he was from up there.) You can't get to the Japanese because there's big boulders all over and they'd get behind a boulder. So the only thing you could do is take hand grenades and throw them over the top, you know. They'd do the same thing. They tapped their hand grenade, throw it over the top, if it didn't go off, well, you'd pick it up, throw it back at them, and save your own. It was a lot of fun in a way.

What do you mean?

Well, you couldn't see anybody. It was like playing Annie-Annie-Over. It didn't seem serious. Until somebody gets hit, then you realize it. Shrapnel would go flying around zig zagging. You would have to lie on your stomach down in that rock.

You saw a lot of combat during that year . . . 1944-1945?

I saw quite a bit . . . yes.

Yes. Even though you were doing radio, you were right there. You saw a lot of it.

I participated in a little bit of it . . . not much. I worked. I heard my call signals.

They got down to Manila pretty fast. They cleared Clark Field and Wainwright and so forth pretty fast . . . in a reasonable length of time, you know. They moved pretty fast. But from there on down, they had a lot of trouble. The 5th Bomber Command moved up to Clark. They didn't follow us because there was no airstrip. Well, there was a little airstrip, but that was used for P-51s and P-38s and fighter aircraft. So they moved back to Clark Air Force Base. And of course, reinforcements had come up. I think they even had a Mexican squadron come in with their wives. Imagine bringing your wives into war; but they did. We had to put up with it because they furnished some fighter aircraft.

I knew better, but I called my squadron frequency. I had to hear it from the one next to me and so I used his transmitter. I called my squadron. I said, "This is Fred Nelson. When the hell are you going to send me home?" And then I signed off, see.

Well, they knew they had another man, but they didn't know where he was. They had word of . . .

Is that why you were there so long?

Yes. Because the major that sent me, rotated back, and he was the only one that knew where I was. Well, a few kids in my tent knew, yes, but they got shipped all over. The command didn't know where I was. So I got down there; they were sending me back to the command. They had orders for me to rotate. And I said, "Goddamn! At least I need a promotion out of this."

They said, "We can't. We already got you . . ."

So I was started on my way home, then. Well, I think they should have gave me a

promotion out of it. Of course I was ornery, but . . .

You were ornery all the way through. What was it like to come back home after all that intense fighting time?

Well, you know something, believe it or not, I've heard a lot about this Vietnam and Korean so-called combat fatigue. Whatever the heck they got—psychology of whatever it is—I didn't believe in it. I never did believe in it.

Didn't think you had it?

Until about, I'd say, maybe ten years ago. Let's see, in 1975 I lost my brother and my mother.

They both died the same year?

Well, a month apart. And then I lost my son. I told him and I told him and I kicked him in the . . . and everything else not to go down a mine shaft without taking a lantern. Keep a lantern down below you or go put it down below you [I told him]. He got down in the mine shaft and got gassed.

So you lost your son?

And my first wife left me. She left me twice. We went back together the first time. The second time, I was back east in school. I just got a telephone call, "I'm going to Reno."

We started to get back again after about, oh, I guess, three years. I knew it wouldn't work and she did, too. So that was it. We had been married thirteen years at the time. I couldn't understand. I couldn't see . . .

Why all these things were happening?

Yes, I couldn't understand it. And then after my son died

We had a little ranch. My brother and I had it together. It was only, altogether, about three acres. We raised all beef on it and we sold beef off from it. We had public pasture and all of that stuff. And we had a nice, large garden and raised pigs.

My son used to come up from college. The other son was still with his mother. Well, he'd come from college and he filled his car plum full. He was putting his own way through college and he needed help. Then he would get into my mother's freezer and in my freezer. Took every bone he could get. He loved his soup. He was always making soup. And then, of course, we'd give him steaks and stuff like that. We always had a lot of frozen fish and stuff like that. He'd take a lot of that with him. He'd take everything he could get. He had a convertible and a dog. He'd get back down there and they'd have soup. He'd gotten a mandolin and they would sit and he'd play that mandolin. They had a bottle of wine and [would] sing and drink the wine and eat his soup. Well, he'd take them steaks back and cook them. [They would be] sitting on the floor, no furniture or anything else, and here you got steaks, you're eating like a king. And he said, "Well, that's [from] my dad and my uncle." [laughter]

Well, first of all, I can't blame my wife, after I sat down and analyzed things. Like I told my daughter and my other son, go out here on the hill some place and get a nice comfortable place to lean and just sit down and just think of what's happened in the past—why it happened and so forth. Analyze it and then see what is causing your problems. Don't go to a psychologist. He's no better than you are. He goes to somebody to find out what's wrong with him, see.

What did you see when you sat down and thought?

Well, I found out that I was moving around. I did so much in the seventies. I couldn't sit on one spot very long. I had some dang good jobs. I was a fireman for the railroad. I was working for Basalt Rock Company and I had a real good job at that. But I just couldn't [stay put], if something was better. And I wouldn't ask my wife. I'd tell my wife, "I just quit and let's move."

Did you have a temper?

No. That's one thing I didn't have.

Did you have bad dreams?

No. I think, when I got in the service—it was all the fellows I talked to—I could see something better for myself than as a farmer laborer; not necessarily over a farmer.

Because you had been out and seen the world by now?

And that's what I think I was reaching for, but I didn't know how to reach for it, see. I wanted to go to college when I came out of the service. I was out in October. I married June of 1946. I was working for Basalt Rock. I had a good job there and I quit. Then I was going to go in the dairy business. So I went gallivanting around looking for a dairy. Then I went to work for the railroad. For one of them, I was making \$500-\$600 a month back in 1947. That was a lot of money.

You still had the GI Bill available to you?

Oh, yes. I used most of it for my pilot license and stuff. I just took no consideration

of my family—let's put it that way—my wife, or my kids either. I still was under, I guess, like a military regime. That what I said was meant or I wouldn't have said it in the first place.

Pretty much what you lived through in basic training?

Well, it was also what my dad taught me. He only taught me once. The second time he'd beat the hell out of me. "What I said, I said, or I wouldn't have said it in the first place! If I say no, that's exactly what I mean, not maybe. I mean no. And if I think it's wrong, then it's wrong. Whether it's right or wrong is immaterial. It's what I feel, see."

Well, I tried to push that on, see. So I know that it was my fault. We're good friends yet, I mean my wife and I. My present wife and my ex-wife, they get along real good, there's no problem. In fact, my daughter and her get along real well, too. It's just something that I did. I'll say this about it, I tried to tell my kids that there's no blame on either side and don't take it out on your mother if you think she's at fault, or don't take it out on me because you think I'm at fault. It's just something that happened and your mother is a real nice woman. She was a good wife. She was a good mother. And I don't want ever to hear you say a thing against her.

And yet you're saying to me that you feel like some of the impact of being in battle all that time had some effect on your relationship when you got back . . . as you look back now?

Yes, as I look back, I think, as I said, you see a lot of these fellows just can't seem to get . . . well, that was the way I was.

Couldn't quite get settled? Do you think it still affects you to this day?

No. Not as much. For a certain amount, it does.

What do you notice, still?

I don't know. Once in a while, I'll get stressed out like I got to get out. Of course, in a way, I can see it, too. My mother-in-law lives with me. She's eighty-four years old.

We haven't talked at all about Reno. You said you moved to Reno about eight years ago after you were retired.

I retired in 1975.

So about ten, twelve years after you retired, you moved here. What brought you to Reno?

My mother-in-law and father-in-law.

They moved here first?

Well, I moved them and then we moved in behind them.

Does Nevada feel like home to you or does California still feel like home?

No place is getting to be like home to me.

Why is that?

No smoking.

And you still smoke and drink military coffee, you told me.

It has been the custom and it's been the habit and there are songs written about it . . . a cup of coffee and a cigarette. You go to a restaurant, you want a cup of coffee and

you want a cigarette. You can't do that in California.

Did you start smoking in the military or were you smoking before you went?

No, I started smoking when I was in grammar school.

You were ornery right from the beginning, weren't you?

PAUL E. O'DRISCOLL

Ken Adams: If we can start with who you are, where you were born, when you were born, and . . .

Paul E. O'Driscoll: My name is Paul O'Driscoll. I was born in Berkeley, California on July 21, 1925. I was born and raised there in Berkeley; went to high school, grammar school, and the whole chain. We lived up in the Berkeley Hills, overlooking the Bay Area. I had a brother and two sisters. My dad was an accountant.

What was your father's name?

John J. O'Driscoll. He was from Ireland, came over in about 1903 from Waterford, Ireland. My mother's maiden name was Marie Vaudoit. She was born and raised in San Luis Obispo, California. She and my dad were married in 1920, as I recall. My dad bought this house in Berkeley up in the hills for \$7,500. The house sold about a month or two ago for \$395,000, so that's kind of interesting to me. I attended high school with the usual

run-of-the-mill highlights of anybody's high school career.

Did you play sports?

Yes, I played football and basketball. Actually, what I did, just when the war first started, I went to work for the Woolworth Company, after school and Saturdays. That's where I started my thirty-eight years with the company. But that's another story. Actually, when I was in my senior year, everybody in my age group was dying either to get into the Army Air Corps, or the Navy Air Corps, or the Marines. So I, for some reason, chose the Army Air Corps. And I spent some time over at Hamilton Air Field.

The war had already started and . . .

The war had started and I enlisted into the Reserve Corps, which meant that I would be called in as soon as I graduated from school and was eligible. I was processed quite a bit. I made seven trips to the same Hamilton Air



PAUL E. O'DRISCOLL,
IN FRONT OF A B-17 FLYING FORTRESS,
FOGGIA AIR BASE, 1945

Force Base there in Marin County. I was in the reserve and that meant I could be called. I was out of high school in June of 1943, I guess it was, and was called into the service January 1944. I went from Berkeley down to Fort Ord, from Fort Ord over to Buckley Field for basic training, back to Lincoln, Nebraska where we were crewed up, and then we took a train down to Dyersburg and got our crew training there.

Your father was an accountant, and I take it, that through the Depression he was employed and things were OK for you guys.

It wasn't . . . you know, with four kids in the family. Four kids was like having twelve

kids. Most of my friends were one or two in a family. The O'Driscoll family was quite big for those days. Of course, I have seven kids myself, today, but families are bigger.

But it wasn't especially difficult for you?

No.

Did you think about, before you got into high school, what you were going to be?

Well, when I was a young kid, I always wanted to be a railroad engineer or fireman, that type of stuff. See, the war started in 1941 and that put kind of a blank on thinking about what you wanted to be, when everybody was going into the service. As I recall, it was just, "I'm going into the service. I'll figure out what I want to be if I come back from this stupid war and take it from there."

Did you talk about the war with the boys? Did you follow the newspaper and say, "Well, I want to be one of those"? Was there a lot of that?

Oh, yes. We saw a lot of war pictures in those days, and movies. I guess it was quote, unquote "propaganda", but it got everybody in the thick of things. We had air raid wardens, neighborhood watches, blackouts; they had a lot of that in the Bay Area. You drove your car at night with the parking lights on. Things were hard to get; tires were impossible. Gas was rationed. Shoes were rationed. Butter was a thing of the past.

Did the rationing bother you?

No, you just learned to live with it. I was, perhaps, at the right age. Rationing might have bothered my dad a little bit, and my mother, or older people, but I never had

the experience of being without after being with . . . if you follow me. My dad had all of whatever he had for forty, fifty years, then all of a sudden, this cutback. It might have worked a hardship on him. But being at the age I was, I don't think it worked that much of a hardship on me.

Did the government try to convince everybody that those things were their contribution to the war?

That's exactly right.

Did you buy into that? You were young boys. I can see how you would get excited about that, "Boy, we're doing our share," kind of thing.

Oh, yes. But you worked your way into it. My mother-in-law, she was a staunch Red Cross person, served in the Red Cross overseas in First World War, and she was doing the same thing. She ran the Red Cross department there in Berkeley that made bandages.

You call her your mother-in-law. Does that mean you were going with the same girl in high school that you later married?

Yes, that's exactly right. We were engaged for four years. Two of those years I was overseas. [laughter]

Your adolescence was one of planning for war? There were no dreams about careers?

No.

Your career was war and . . .

That's right.

You didn't think past that?

You just didn't think past it. This was the big thing. Papers carried all this, the radio—we didn't have TV in those days—but my dad used to listen to Gabriel Heder and there was some good news at night. Everything revolved around the war: newspapers, headlines, radio news broadcasts, all updating everybody, actually.

Was your father pretty intense about the war?

Oh, yes. Yes, he was, he followed it very closely. Of course, when my brother and I went in, he was even more concerned, naturally. And my mother, too, as any parent would be. "What's he doing? Where is he?"

Gosh, my mother used to send, overseas to me in Italy, packets of flower seeds. I'd sent her some pictures of the tent area and so forth. She said, "Probably what you need is a few flowers around that tent." And what do you do? You plant the flower seeds.

And then some of them came up?

Two were bigger than us. But, getting back to the original question again, it was a situation where war, war, war . . . Every guy was in it, so, naturally, it kind of blanketed your thoughts.

Oh, we had a lot of fun. We went to school dances. I met Margaret, and we dated; it was normal high school things. But in the back of everything, even if you went out on a date or went to a dance, [there was the presence of war]. If you were driving, it was, be home before the stroke of twelve, don't use headlights, and watch where you are going. You never knew what might happen there, and that was it.

You have two groups of people that are concerned about you when you go in. You've

got your parents, and you've got your girlfriend. When you go in, they are bound to take this all very seriously, especially your girlfriend. You are two eighteen year old kids, and even though you're just going to basic training, this is bound to be a pretty emotional time. You're going off to war—that's serious stuff.

Well, that's it. As I recall it, you grew up mighty fast, believe me. You were a teeny bopper and you were a veteran, within a year. Once you go, basic training was over like that.

Basic training was in Fort Ord? It lasted about eight weeks?

More like six, and three of those weeks you were on KP; you learned about how to wash dishes and the rest of that stuff.

Do you remember what basic training was like for you?

Scary I remember one thing that we had to learn was to crawl on our belly underneath some barbed wire; they shot live ammunition. They still do this, I understand, in basic training today.

And we were told, "For God sakes, if you get scared, don't raise your head up above that wire, because there's live ammunition."

Then we'd go into some room and stand there with our gas masks. All of the sudden there'd be this kind of cold feeling—a gas bomb. They dropped it and we had to sit there until we could smell this stuff, this gas, and then see if we knew how to put on our gas mask and take off through the door and get out into fresh air. We'd cough and cry and one thing or another. But, there again, we just learned the basic fundamentals of how to sniff gas, what to do when you do, and how to put your gas mask on. But in the war, they never

used gas. So it's training, and luckily we didn't have to use it.

We pulled on this thing on a parachute and the parachute would open up. When you land, don't be stiff, just let your knees fold up and kind of cushion you a little bit. I never had to use a parachute, but it was the training. Things moved so fast, you really didn't

You knew you were going to be in the Air Corps. This is the Army that you are in, but this is the

They called it the Army Air Corps in those days. Nowadays, it's a branch of the service all by itself, the Air Force.

Was the training with people who were infantrymen, or were you separate?

Basic was with pretty much everybody, in Fort Ord. Then when we went from Fort Ord to Buckley Field in Denver, Colorado, that was Air Corps.

And what kind of training was that?

More of the same In fact, we got there in, oh, February and there was snow up to your eyeballs back there, so we didn't do anything outdoors. It was a lot of basic training indoors: aircraft recognition, where you would see silhouettes up there and was that a friend or a foe, and that type of stuff; how to use your microphone, push to talk?, it'd be a little button on your guns when somebody would call you on the headset; we would have an oxygen check or something like that. It took a little training to realize, push the button, then say something, and then say over, so that who you are calling understands that you are through and you want to hear from them.

At this point, did you have an assignment? Do you know you are going to be a tail gunner?

No.

There isn't an airplane you're going to be assigned to or anything at this point?

No. I knew I was going to be a gunner, I didn't know what position. And I was in Kingman, Arizona.

How long was the school in Denver?

It couldn't have been more than four to six weeks. Then we went down to Kingman, Arizona. If you've ever been to Kingman, you know it's desert down there. That's where we got some training in how to fire .50 caliber machine guns. After we learned how to fire the guns, then we went to the aircraft. They had B-17s there. That didn't mean you were going to fly B-17s, necessarily. We would fire our guns out the waist position at a target that was towed by a little AT-6 plane. And believe it or not, some of those damn AT-6's were shot down.

So the first part of your training would have been on the ground?

On the ground . . .

Stationary mounted .50 calibers wouldn't have allowed movement.

Well, there was a little movement. They had railroad tracks out in the desert and little railroad cars running along with flags, and you had to shoot at them just to get the feel of the gun and how to lead a moving target. In flight training, we were shooting at clay pigeons off the back of a pickup truck with shotguns. A moving target, the clay pigeon

would fly through the air from a moving truck bed. You would lead your moving target from a moving base.

Was taking care of the guns an important part of the training?

Oh, yes.

Cleaning them, taking them apart and putting them back together . . .

Scrub them down, clean them, oil them; we didn't have to do that with the .50 caliber machine gun, but we cleaned them. But we had to learn to strip .45s and to reassemble it with the bolt on; that was the piece that you carried in your shoulder holster. Some of them carried it on the hip but I had a shoulder holster.

You didn't have any room where you sat in the tail to tie it to your hip. [laughter]

That's right. It was quite a bulge. We finished gunnery school in Kingman.

Were you building a sense of pride?

Oh, yes. Definitely.

At this point . . . ?

You were kind of a veteran now, you know. You'd see some recruits come in. You've got a PFC stripe and they've got nothing. So you feel like you're pretty good. Then you get your corporal stripes. When you get overseas, you get sergeant stripes, then staff sergeant stripes—that's the highest rank that a gunner could get.

I remember one time, coming back to the States, I got on a troop train. These two fellows from Brooklyn were arguing about who's

going to sleep on the top berth. In those days on a troop train, they slept two in the bottom berth and one on top. As I got on the train, they were standing in the aisle arguing about who was going to have the top. They were corporals. And this was the first time, and last time, I ever pulled rank, "I'll take the top and you boys can have the bottom bunk." There was no question. So that's one of the joys of rank.

This is the third school you'd been at. Did you get to go home on leave between them?

I got a leave out of Dyersburg when we finished there, and that was it.

How were you treated when you went home on leave?

By my family or friends?

Well, in general . . . everybody . . .

Oh, pretty well, really . . . Friends that knew me, "Oh, you're home on leave?" Everybody knew that, you know. You had to wear a uniform and of course Margaret, my wife, later, was quite proud to walk around with this guy who was doing his bit in the service for his country and all that stuff. They treated us quite well. We got a little bit of a recognition for what we were endeavoring to do. It was the fastest two or three weeks . . .

How did your dad feel about it?

My dad wanted to know everything. He felt good. He was in the Coast Guard in World War I, and he never got out of the San Francisco Bay. But he wanted to know what was going on. Of course, you'd write letters home and try to fill them in, but that's nothing like just sitting down at the dinner table and

after dinner, hashing it over and answering questions. Talking would jar somebody's mind a little bit and . . .

Was he proud of you?

Oh, yes. My brother was in the Navy and I was in the Air Corps. My brother was stationed, at one time, down by Candlestick Ballpark there in Hunter's Point Navy Yard. He was a signalman. We lived on the Berkeley Hills, twenty or thirty miles away. On a clear night, he would signal. He taught me how to read signals. We were home at the same time, one time, and I said, "Mother, your son John out there is signalling you." He couldn't do too much, you know, just something to say hello. It was fun.

When you finished gunnery school in Kingman, then where did you go?

As I recall, I went from Kingman to Lincoln, Nebraska. That's where we got crewed up. And that's where the book starts, on the train after we . . . no, we're going to Dyersburg, Tennessee, and I am a member of Lieutenant Bob Sankovich's crew. I had never met Lieutenant Sankovich. I didn't know any of the other members. I was just totally alone on this train going to Dyersburg. I met everybody else when I got to Dyersburg.

Through the troop train came these two gentlemen. This is the first time I met him. One said, "I'm looking for members of Sankovich's crew," right there in the train.

I said, "I'm a member of his crew. I've never met him."

He said, "What's your name?"

And I said, "Paul O'Driscoll."

He said, "Oh, then I got you listed here. I'm Bucky Rous." I've known Bucky now for fifty-five years.

What was his job? Is he the crew chief?

No. He ended up as crew chief. By size, he was a little on the short size, and that's how he got that prize. Reaber had gone to radio school and learned that phase of it, so he was radioman.

Radio school plus gunner school or . . .

Yes, he had to go to gunnery school, too, but his primary job was radio operator.

Did you get any additional training other than basic training and gunnery school? Did you get any other specialty training?

No, just the gunnery, then I was listed as a gunner for Sank's crew.

I don't understand what Lincoln, Nebraska, was as part of the process. That was just a processing . . . ?

Just a processing point . . .

You went through and they give you these records . . .

We were there about two weeks.

Pulled a little KP?

Oh, yes. It was hot. Lincoln is somewhat like Washington; there is high humidity, believe it or not. We got into town one night. All of the sudden we were given orders to go to Dyersburg. "You will meet your crew there. Your crew captain is Lieutenant Sankovich."

You had a copy of orders like Bucky did, that had everybody else on the crew on it so . . .

I went to the men's room in this Pullman car on the troop train. One of the latrines at the end of the car, it was a room about half this size, you couldn't use because you couldn't get in there. The Army—and they still do it—had cut enough orders for everybody on the troop train to have a dozen copies and they were all stacked in there. [laughter] Army orders said these orders must go with the men. The only place they could find to fit the documents was the latrine. Bucky, he was an old infantryman that transferred into the Air Corps and he was a little wiser than some of us, in those days, and he realized, these are the orders, and he got a couple of pouches.

So he understood what he had. He was a little older than you were?

I was eighteen. Pop Reaber was thirty-one, he was the oldest one in the crew. Sank was twenty-one. Leo Schwartz was from Temple University and a Joe College, a swinger . . . I can still see him. He was about twenty. We had a lot of baby faces. I was next to the youngest. I was eighteen.

This had become typical. This is probably March or April of 1944?

Yes.

The people going in now are the younger ones, the high school graduates.

Oh, yes. [laughter] Leo, he went back and finished at Temple University. I saw him at a reunion in Colorado Springs, first time in forty-five years, about two years ago. He hadn't changed a bit . . . a little grey hair on top is all. But I formed some great friendships. Believe me, I know all those guys. I call them on the phone. I see most of them every year

and of all the things that you get out of being in the service, being on a crew like I was with ten people, the friendship and the . . . how to put it?

You and Bucky were on your way to Dyersburg. You've got your assignment, but you haven't met anybody.

That's right.

You get to Dyersburg, and what's next?

Well, we crew up. We meet everybody. Sankovich is fresh out of pilot training school. He's a good pilot; damn good pilot for twenty-one. So we meet each other and of course, we've got a pilot, co-pilot, navigator, and radio operator. You've got an engineer, so you've got four gunners; two waist gunners, a ball turret gunner, and a tail gunner. One of the gunners, Threet, is the armament man, so he's got to be a waist gunner. You've got Senter, Rous, and O'Driscoll left. You can be either a ball turret gunner, a waist gunner, or a tail gunner. Bucky Rous was the shortest; he got the ball turret. Senter thought he would be a good waist gunner, and he was. So, well, what's left? [laughter]

The tail gun.

By process of elimination I became the tail gunner.

And you haven't even been in the tail yet.

No.

You didn't know what it was.

No, I didn't. I learn fast, I really do.

Good choice . . .

Damn good choice, god . . . From my view from the tail I always saw where we had been. Very seldom did I see where we was going. So that's where that title came from. We started flying together and most of them were training missions. We fired our guns on some of those. We would fly formation, always.

This plane is a . . . ?

B-17. And we'd fly formation squadron of seven planes. We'd be either Baker One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, or Seven, number seven in the squadron. We'd fly over the Mississippi Valley there, over Meridian. We used to fly down to Meridian, Mississippi, that's where they had a fighter training school with B-51s, I remember, and B-38s. We had gun cameras that were mounted on our guns and would make pursuit passes as though they were the enemy. They would get training and we would get training, taking pictures with our gun cameras . . . no bullets . . . just cameras. They were coming at us, and the training was whether or not we could follow them. We used to make night missions to train the navigator. We'd always go along. When we'd land, we'd have to . . . every time I see these people at the airports today that are walking and doing this and doing that, bringing the planes in, parking them . . . we did that, too. We'd walk the wings. We had to gas the B-17's.

You'd walk the wings . . . guide the other planes in?

No, our plane . . . We'd land, they'd kill the outboard engines. There are four engines on the B-17 and they'd kill the outboard engines on landing. Then we'd pile out and we'd get on the tip, not on the tip of the wing, but underneath, and walk. So the pilot could look out and see

where his wing tip was all the time. If the pilot had to turn: "No, you're too close," you use signals to go that way. We always did the maintenance; gassing them up, and pulling the props through in the morning. On a cold morning, there's nothing better to do. It not only gets the engines going, pulling those props through, it gets you going, too, I'll tell you. [laughter].

Because it's hard when you pull those?

Oh, yes. You'd reach up. There were three blades. Two guys would pull this blade, they'd come around, and you'd pull out another two.

Was learning to do all the routine maintenance of the plane the responsibility of the crew, too?

We had a crew chief to pull an engine or do maintenance work as far as engine replacements, or whatever. But our flight engineer . . .

Your crew chief, did he fly?

He was ground personnel. He might have been responsible, with his subordinates, for maybe three or four planes.

They were the real mechanics?

They were the mechanics.

You guys put in gas, and . . .

We'd put in gas and do just maintenance so that, should we get broke down someplace, we'd know how to gas this B-17 up. And we were forced down in Brindisi one time. There was no maintenance crew, and we had to wait for a gas truck to come out. The driver didn't know how to gas up the B-17; he drove the darn truck. We had been trained on this. You had to put a static

line so the damn stuff wouldn't blow—pretty high stuff that hundred octane gasoline. Let's say we learned to become, the phrase I think is, "become a team." Ten men and we each of us had our own responsibilities, and part of that responsibility was looking after your buddy.

Did you have post duty too? Did you have things like KP and guard duty?

Oh, yes, but not when you got overseas.

But here during training you did?

Oh, yes.

Did the officers have to pull "Officer of the Day" training?

I'm sure they did.

Did you have a social life?

We'd go down to the PX or the "Enlisted Men's Club." We never got to the "Officer's Club." That was verboten. Once in a while, in Dyersburg, you'd go in on a weekend. They had the town square there, and the townspeople would have a big watermelon feed for all the G.I.'s coming in from the base. You'd get kind of sick and tired of watermelon after a while. There were a couple of movie houses and you'd take in a movie, maybe, just to get off the base.

Ranson Senter, one of the waist gunners, lived in Ironton, Missouri, which is about two hundred miles northwest of Dyersburg. A couple of weekends we got a pass. Then we hitchhiked all the way to Ironton and I met his family. I remember those mountains there in the state; there's pretty country up there. And then Monday, at four in the morning, we'd hop in the truck and Ranson's parents

would take us back to the base. I'd ride in the back with an extra fifty gallon tank of gasoline. Farmers got a lot of gasoline in those days. I rode in the back with the gas and Ranson, his mother, and dad were up in front. I saw a lot of Missouri and Tennessee and a little bit of Kentucky.

You said that one of the waist gunners was the armament.

Yes. Lyman Threet.

What does that mean?

He didn't have to load the bomb, but he was responsible for it. Put it this way, the captain of our crew, Bob Sankovich, who was in charge, would ask, "Are the bombs secure, Corporal Lyman?"

"Yes, they are. Practice bombs are secure."

He worked in connection with the pilot and also, with the bombardier.

Who loaded the bombs?

The armament crew would come out with their trailers. Usually, overseas, when we flew a mission, they would load the bombs at night. We'd get up about four in the morning and go to chow and come back and then go to briefing and then go down and draw our flight gear, parachutes, etc. and then go out to the airplane and dress out there. You'd just put your heated suit on over your regular clothes. Then you'd put your flight jacket and those fur lined pants on top of that. And then it would be a little hard to walk about because you've got so much clothing on. Those heated suits were all wired, you know, inside with coils. At this point all the bombs had been loaded by

armament personnel. Planes were gassed up by ground crews, who worked all night, and ready to go.

You had the heated suits already during training? Because you were flying at the high altitudes. You bombed at ten thousand feet or higher, right?

Right. Yes.

The planes weren't air-conditioned? [laughter]

They were air-conditioned, yes, by fresh air they were.

You always had to have the electric flight suits, didn't you?

Oh, yes. You could go up to ten thousand and slightly above without having a heated suit on, but you get around twenty thousand feet and you had better have something on, and you get to thirty and you must have it on. And of course, when you get to ten thousand feet, you had to go on oxygen, wherever you were. So you put on the oxygen mask and turn up the dial and away you'd go.

The training at Dyersburg, how long did that last?

Dyersburg was six to eight weeks as I recall.

You've got a crew and this is serious training because the next assignment is going to be your combat assignment?

Right.

What did that feel like?

Well, I tell you, each day at Dyersburg, without sounding corny, you began to feel more like a team, like you knew what you were doing. The time that Sank almost fell out of the plane, that tested our nerves a little bit. It tested Bucky's and Lyman's reaction—they pulled Bob back through. And it tested Leo, who was flying. Until we got to Dyersburg, Tennessee, the co-pilot had only flown multi-engine aircraft, like maybe a Beechcraft with two engines. He had never flown a B-17. Leo would be making touch and go landings, learning to land this big B-17.

So the pilot, Sankovich, was well trained on B-17s, but the co-pilot wasn't?

He'd been to flight school and had flown a twin engine Beechcraft. That was what he was trained in.

Sometimes the co-pilots were the ones who had less training and sometimes they were the ones who didn't appear to be going to make it as pilots?

There was a lot of them washed out, sure.

Yours was just one that they didn't send all the way through school? They assigned him sooner?

They were demanding people. They needed replacements and believe me, we were fortunate we got as much training as we did. Some of them, they didn't get half of what we got. They were losing ships over the battle areas overseas, right and left. Guys would come up for rotation. You'd fly so many missions, so many sorties, then you got a trip home or you got a trip to Capri for a little R&R. But in order to get you away from flying, they needed replacements while you were

either back in the States or on leave. And the war still went on.

Did you get leave before you left for overseas?

I did, for two weeks. When we had finished in Dyersburg we ended up, of all places, back in Lincoln, briefly. That was the main Air Corps processing base.

Did you go home for the two weeks?

Oh, yes. We flew American Airlines, a DC3.

Your family and your girlfriend know that you're going to a combat assignment, now. So this visit must have been a little different than the last ones.

Yes. It was a little bit different. "I don't know where I'm going—whether it's going to be the European theater, North Africa, Italy, the Hump, the South Pacific—but I know I'm going." I said goodbye to everybody. We got back off furlough and . . .

Did you get a lot of letters?

Overseas? Oh, god yes. The weather over in Italy is . . . they call it sunny Italy, but we had snow, and we had mud up to the top of your head. We had a lot of down time, if you want to call it that, when you're not operational where you wrote letters home, where you played cards, or worked on the tent. We used to lift the flaps, extend the flaps out and scrounge around for packing cases from engines and whatever to make a board that would hold the tent flaps up so you could have a little more room. We had six men in that tent. It's cozy sometimes.

We had a brick floor and the stove and, well, it's cozy. We could make toasted cheese sandwiches, and they had a ration of beer, and we'd have a little party every once in a while, sit around and do anything from singing to . . . We had a lot of room for talking. There were no radios. You entertained yourselves.

You said you played cards. What kind of card games did you play?

We didn't play any bridge. I can't even recall; poker, a little poker.

So, after you go back on leave you go to Lincoln. Where do you go from there?

We get on the train and head for Patrick Henry, Hampton Roads, Virginia, on this two and a half day train trip.

When was this? What was the month and the year?

This was 1944, right about the end of September. It was a two day jaunt. We were not in Pullman cars. I remember we were in straight, green velour chairs in the old trains. And you slept in that position. They were not air conditioned. About the second night out, you'd get kind of tired. You're not able to get off the train. There is no air-conditioning.

The sergeant came through, and he's looking for volunteers. Well, in the Army, you don't volunteer. But then I said to myself, "You know, whatever kind of volunteer duty it is, it's got to be on the train. I'm going to be on this train someplace." So I volunteered. So we went to the vestibule of the car, and I said, "Sergeant, you mind telling me what I just volunteered for?"

He says, "Yes. Sure. You're going to be fire guard on the stoves in the KP car. The job is

making sure that these fires are burning all night so that early in the morning, everything is hot and ready to go." One of the perks was that after he showed me how to do the fires, when he left me there, he said, "Now here are the keys to the refrigeration and storage compartment. Help yourself to anything you want. Just clean up after yourself."

I had some cooking training from my mother, and I made out quite well. I remember going through Wheeling, West Virginia, sitting in the doorway of that kitchen car, eating an apple, feet dangling, and the West Virginia countryside going by. It was at night. We pulled into Wheeling, West Virginia, to take on water or something, I guess. A few people standing there, they'd look up and say, "Well, this is a troop train." Everybody was sound asleep, but this one guy munching on an apple. It was one little thing that I remember.

We got to Patrick Henry and we were there about two weeks. But some of the processing, well, I'll tell you what, they said, "You're going to have your final OC's," (over-seas physical). There were strict orders that you wore your helmet liner, which was the liner inside your metal helmet, your rain coat, and your shoes—period. That was the uniform of the day. Nothing else shall be worn.

Well, it was thirteen hundred hours, just after lunch, and we fall out, dressed in our helmet, our rain coat, and shoes. One of the things the Air Force doesn't do, even today . . . well, maybe today, it's a little better, but we couldn't march in military order. We marched about ten minutes and staggered to a halt and went into this big building and it was dark. We were told to hang our helmets and trench, or rain, coats on a nail; if you just rub your hand along the wall, you'll find lots of nails there. We did as we were told. There we are, standing naked as jaybirds, except for

our shoes, and then all of a sudden your eyes get used to this room, and you realize there's several hundred G.I.'s attired just as you are in this room.

Down the line comes this sergeant and he says, "Now, do whatever the fellow in front of you does; you follow and do exactly what he does."

So we're in line. All of a sudden you'd see three flood lights, and then you're, maybe, ten from the front of the line and there's the three floodlights behind three "bird colonel" doctors. One of them has got a pencil and when these two are giving the exam, he puts it like that. Well, the exam consisted of marching up in front, doing a right face, bending over, and spreading your cheeks. You hear that click, the pencil hitting the lamp stand, you stand up, do a left face, and get the hell out. We all passed this overseas physical. And the only lesson was, that everybody that did that little routine can say that they actually mooned a bird colonel. [laughter]

It was a little exciting. It was, like, pouring paratroopers, Air Force, everybody into this big funnel, and down at the end where the stuff comes out, is the troop transport we were to cross on. We were on the *USS Athos*, which was a converted French liner, a big son of a gun. We were told one night to be ready to go. By eight-thirty that morning we formed our line. We had all our belongings with us, and we marched down to this big ocean liner. I had never seen an ocean liner and it was big. And we got onto that.

What did you use for luggage?

I wish we had a duffel bag. In those days, we didn't. They gave us a blanket and we were told to roll our belongings in this blanket and make like an infantryman. Well, when you get Air Force men trying to make like an

infantryman and roll an infantry pack, you have a mess. You really did. When we started off marching, some of the stuff would fall out, one thing or another. So somebody, some place in the line, started singing the Air Corps song. I guess they had seen too many movies or something. Well, he didn't get past, "into the wild blue yonder," before we shut him up. We got out to the boat and, believe me, it was something to get on that boat. They wanted your name, rank, and serial number, period. They'd check you off any list you were on.

So, in your blankets you've got rolled up, you don't have much. You have a spare uniform . . .

That's it.

. . . a couple pairs of socks, a couple pairs of underwear . . .

Yes.

. . . and your shaving kit.

That's it.

Probably your writing pad . . .

When you get over there, they issue another uniform and whatever you need. They're just interested in getting the bodies from here to there, and then they'll take care of them when they get over there. Nobody knew where we were going, including the guy that was in charge of us. So it was . . .

Your orders, up to here, have all been one stage at a time; you go from here to there.

That's right.

Nothing more than that?

Nothing.

Sometimes it must appear that nobody has any strategic plan for you, that they're just moving you around because they have nothing else to do.

Exactly Hurry up and wait, as they used to call it. When we got on that ship, it was so funny. We'd ask, you know, "Where are we going?"

"We're going to F deck, compartment three."

I was in a group of a couple hundred men, I guess. Our leader, I forgot even who he was, he didn't know where F deck was either. I think he must have said to himself: "Well, if I go all the way up to A deck, and find that part of the stairway to come down, I will eventually find F deck." And that's what we did. We got down to F deck, about a half-hour, forty-five minutes later.

We found our bunks, which consisted of canvas hanging from these pipes, like submarine accommodations. If you wanted to get into your bunk and somebody was standing there, he'd have to get into his bunk so you could walk by to get into your bunk. It was that close quarters.

The first day of my launch, we're off out of Hampton Roads, Virginia. We had a blimp covering us. Later on that afternoon, they turned around and came back in. I said, "Is the war over?"

"No way." That was just a diversionary tactic, I guess.

The next morning, I woke up and realized that we were moving again. You could hear the engine vibrations and one thing or another. I went up on deck. It was dark, very dark. I got up on deck and against that skyline, all you could see were ships. I mean troop ships, big destroyers, and all that. It

was awesome. "Well, we must be with our convoy." And away we go.

In the light of day, it really became apparent that you were in a part of something big. This is for real.

Was your crew together during the trip overseas?

Oh, yes. We still didn't know where we were going, and never found out until we got to Naples, Italy.

It took two weeks? Some of the traditional stories are about being seasick and the legendary crap games. Did you see any crap games?

[laughter] Oh, boy, you had better believe it. Hollywood had to have picked that up from somebody that knew about them. The enlisted men were not allowed to go any further up the ladder than C deck. C deck was the only deck that you could go up and get some air on. You could go to B, but you'd better be an officer, somebody with a little brass. And A, of course, was out of sight. So C deck was very crowded, especially when it was a nice warm day. We did have some days we'd strip down to our waist and then get in the sun, you know. And then some days started crappy. We came upon some life boat canvas and spread that, to sit under, all over the place. We had a lot of men there. A lot of them.

How many do you think were on the ship?

Well, I've taken a trip, Betty and I, to the Caribbean on a cruise on one of these luxury liners and I think there were two or three thousand people on that ship. I would say, probably, six thousand, at a guess, maybe more. It was a big ship. When you get three to a tier and no facilities on C deck except one aft

and one forward, if you have to go in a hurry, you had better get up to C deck and down to the stern of the bow in a hurry.

We spent our idle time reading and writing letters. You'd have to take your letters to one of the officers on your crew, and he would censor it. They made a big deal out of that, I think. You could tell them you were in Italy. You couldn't say you were bombing so and so. But we went through that routine. And, of course, the officers were kind of lenient and didn't want to read all of the letter.

I remember going through the Straits of Gibraltar. Margaret Burke White was a guest on our trip, on A deck. To see, we had to leap on the bow area of the ship, and were just hanging from everything. She was down there and she gave us a little lecture, if you want to call it that, on the loudspeaker as we went past the Straits of Gibraltar . . . you know, the rock. She gave us a little bit of history. It was a little different.

She had been on a ship that was sunk going across to North Africa, once.

Well . . .

*She'd had a less than pleasant crossing.
[laughter]*

Well, she was very interesting . . . very interesting. I remember they had a little USO group that was going over and they'd give us a little routine, a song and dance bit. That kind of broke it up a little bit. Then they hit this big storm . . .

None of the big names travelled with your . . . ?

No. Nothing like Bob Hope or any of that stuff. But it was entertainment and you know, a little different.

We got into this storm. We were having turkey. You went to a line with this mess kit—I don't know if you are familiar with a mess kit, but it has one big round pan about that big and then a partition here and a great big mug that you put coffee in. You'd go through the line, "Yeah, I'll have some of that," and he'd slop it in. The first thing you know, you've got vegetables with mashed potatoes and turkey with salad with gravy on top of all that. Then over here you might have something else and then maybe a dessert, say apple pie and a big slab of ice cream on top of that, and then a cup of coffee. You're going like this trying to find a table. You find a table, you don't sit. You can get more bodies in a mess hall if they're standing at a table that's waist high. You can stand there and eat. It was good food. I'm not knocking the food.

We hit this storm. In the mess area the port holes were open for air, what with all this food and smells from the kitchen, you know. Well, the ship started really hitting it and the food waste containers were catching it too, if you know what I mean. The water came in through those port holes so fast you didn't realize . . . boom! and it was pouring in through these doggone things. So we closed the port holes. We couldn't get up to C deck because it was not safe to walk the deck in that kind of weather at sea. So we had to go back to compartment F, and that's not the place to be in a rough storm. There were people that had just eaten and of course, you can realize what would happen, and it did.

Finally we got to Naples. That was something. Boy, they really had bombed that city. We got to Naples and we were told that we'd have to be on the ship another day, at dock, and we'd exit the ship tomorrow. So we exited the ship the next day and they marched us through the town, part of Naples right there by the docking area, which really

wasn't a docking area. It was big enough to get the ship in as far as depth and so forth and turn it. But you got off that ship, and boy you could see it was really hit by bombs and what not from the war.

The march took maybe half an hour. And all the time, little Italian rag-a-muffin kids, would be saying, "Cigarettes? Cigarettes?" You know, you get an introduction to overseas. These Italian kids had been through the war, and they were looking for cigarettes and chocolate bars and one thing or another and all this stuff.

We ended up at what's left of the railroad station. We get in these World War I type freight cars, box cars, little bitty things that were about half the size of a box car that we have here. And this is our home for the next five hours. We'd stop and go and stop and go. Finally, we got to where we were going, which was Caserta, about twenty, twenty-five miles outside of Naples, where the king of Italy's palace was. You could look up and see it. Our destination was this replacement depot, which was our home for the next week, I guess it was. There we got processed. They took our American money and gave us Italian equivalent money. We got orientated as far as In other words, this is where they say, "We'll send these people here or there or wherever."

We still didn't know where we were going. The pilot and co-pilot came down to our tent one evening and said, "I guess you're wondering where we're going?"

"Yes."

"We're going to a place called Foggia, which is on the Adriatic Coast, the other side of Italy. We'll be stationed there as part of the 463rd Bomb Group, the 'Swoose Group' as they call it."

Well, we had some time there. Leo Schwartz, Bucky, and myself went into Naples

and looked the town over a little bit. Of course, having an officer along helped get in places. Then all of a sudden we got the idea to go down and see the Lost City of Pompeii, which we did. We spent an afternoon looking at this uncovered town. They'd excavated Pompeii and a lot of people went to see the ruins. It was quite an interesting day. We went down on a train, a little two car train packed to the gills, and back the same way.

Then one day we were told to be ready to go in the morning. Again we took a GI truck, went down to the railroad station and got on the old boxcars again. It's a long trip by rail. The night before Senter said, "We're going to take a trip tomorrow. We should have a little extra supply of K-rations." Senter was the scrounger, you might say.

He had guard duty on the K-ration section and was told to take a few more. They just handed him some, so we had a few extra. This is nothing. We don't lay claim to being the only ones that did it.

Every outfit needed somebody who could scrounge up a little extra stuff?

There you go. We got on this train and off we go. The trip took us all day. It got hotter and hotter as we went I remember. Some of the guys were stripping down to the waist or crawling up on top of the boxcar—they had little handrails—to lie out on top of these boxcars. I didn't do this because right above their heads is the electric power line that was feeding the locomotive and I just didn't want to get that close. We saw the Appennini Mountains, and all these aqueducts. It was beautiful country and no evidence of war there. That was quite a scenic ride.

As always happened with me, we get to a new base and it's pitch dark. We took the trucks again from Foggia out to the air base.

Here's Foggia and the roads are like spokes in a wheel. In order to get here, you don't come this way, you go into the "hub" of the wheel and out another spoke, which takes a lot of time. We got to the base and they fed us some dinner, such as it was, beans and hot dogs. We went to the supply sergeant and got a fold-up cot—you got a cot and a blanket. Only the tent was set up. We just set our things down, laid out on those cots, pulled a little blanket over us, and went to sleep.

Next morning we got up and went to the mess hall and had some breakfast, then came back and picked up our belongings and returned them to the supply sergeant. And he, in turn, issued us a tent (a pyramidal tent) and cots again, and a couple of blankets, this time. We had signed for a loan of a sledgehammer and a shovel.

We were told, "You will set your tent up in this spot."

So we pitched a tent, pounding in the pegs with the sledgehammer, and dug a trench around it because it was rainy weather. We were told that we would receive a load of brick for the floor of our tent in the next day or two. And sure enough, in a couple of days we had the brick. We laid the brick and that's where it started.

You said you made the stove out of a combination of things.

That is a little bit later. We had the tent and we had our cots. We put the brick floor down. Now, we look around and we see other tents there, and they've got these stoves with smoke coming out of the chimney. Most of the stove pipes, where they came out the tops of the tents, were made of cans that you would scrounge from the back of the mess hall. They'd wire them together and lash them to the main post in the tent so

they'd go through the hole at the top. We were considering that.

We got the lay of the land a little bit. The first thing, we found ourselves a fifty-gallon drum, which was cut down to about half size. That was the stove. We had a hollow cut in it. Well, it was there actually. They had enlarged it a little bit to fill the contents of the fifty-gallon drum. We just beat it down a little bit. We scrounged and found a P-38 wing tank that was no longer in use, some aluminum tubing from a couple of JU-88s that had crash landed in the area, and a couple of pit rocks that we picked up from some mechanic down on the line, I think that was. We're in pretty good shape except we didn't have that stove pipe. We found a stove pipe just by chance. It was sticking out of the ground beside the road on the way to the flight line. So on an "after hours operation" we all went down and with the aid of our flashlights and a couple of hacksaw blades, cut off about, oh, I guess it was, maybe, twelve-fourteen foot of pipe, and lugged it back to our tent.

You don't know why the pipe was there in the first place?

No, it just was sticking up out of the ground.

Just waiting for you.

Yes, I guess. [laughter]. I'll put it this way; we had the best stove pipe in the whole squadron. It was a humdinger.

And the others, we'd assume, would smoke a lot and people would have smoke in their tent.

We had to make sure our main post that we had the pipe attached to was securely embedded in the ground. By now, we were in "hog heaven" as they say.

Did you get footlockers or something to keep things in? Where did you put your clothes in the tents?

On kind of a Mickey Mouse rack that you could hang something on, as I recall. You do a lot of ad-libbing . . . in those days at least. You never got called on it. You had to be at point A at a prescribed time, but just as long as it was orderly, you could fix things however you wanted. We had a footlocker, a very crude Italian-made footlocker.

The Italian locals did a lot of building on the base. They were pretty good masons. They could build latrines out of cinder blocks and bricks. The orderly room and mess hall was all cinder block and built by the Italians locals.

Here, you must have been issued some additional clothing and things. All along, you've been traveling with just enough to get you through.

Right. We got a new issue of everything. Probably what everyone did, is just turn in everything when you got issued new stuff. That's the easiest way, and everybody always tried at times to do it the easiest way.

All the jokes about things not fitting. . . do you pretty much get clothes that fit you?

You're not that particular. You're five thousand miles, ten thousand miles, away from home. You're not going to go out and do any socializing where somebody would say, "Your shirt doesn't fit you. It's about a size too big in the neck." As long as it's comfortable and does the job, it's fine. So we're all set.

You didn't get a plane assignment yet? Did you get a permanent plane? Did you always have the same plane?

No, they did not assign permanent planes to anybody.

Some people have drawings on the planes and names and all those things.

We had "The Purple Heart Kid." That's this pretty girl. She's rolled back, pair of shorts on, and she's kicking her legs over her head, holding her touche up. Well, a piece of flack on one of the missions hit her right square in the touche and so that's where we got the name, "The Purple Heart Kid." That was printed on the plane, you know, the "Purple Heart Kid."

"What plane are you flying today?"

"We got the Purple Heart Kid."

When you got your briefings, you got a plane assignment too?

I guess the pilot got it. We didn't. We didn't know what plane we were going to get. The pilot always knew. When we got on board the truck to take us out to the flight line, he would say, "There we are over there." It was so dark I don't know how he found out . . . it was probably by the parking area. The ramp or taxi strip would be off here, you turn, you go out here and there's a little parking area for the ship. Maybe fifty or one hundred yards down would be another turnout.

Was it frustrating for you as an enlisted man, sometimes, not to ever know what was going on?

Well, a little bit . . . But that again is why we were so lucky, I think. We were ten men and each of us started with Sankovich, the top kick. He knew that we were concerned and he'd do his darndest to make sure we heard as soon as he could possibly let us know. "We're not flying. I think we're going to fly tomorrow."

Or, he was sick one time. He came to us, "I'm not going up. I know who's going to be flying for you in my place for a day or two." He went in to have some minor surgery or something. "If the crew flies, you'll be flying with some other pilot." Well, getting the information to the troops, so to speak, was being a part of a ten man crew—it wasn't that hard to do. There was some frustration but you knew you were going to find out the answer to whatever the frustration might be, if there was an answer, because Bob, or Leo, or somebody would cue you in as quickly as possible.

Bob Sankovich, you said, died in January of this year?

February of this year

When he died, you still had nine out of the ten crew alive?

No, eight now

Now there are eight since he died?

Yes. The first fellow that died was Pop Reaber. And he died, oh god, late fifties, early sixties. It's been twenty-five years, anyway.

He was ten years older than you?

Yes, he was thirty-one when I was eighteen. So he would be in his eighties today if he were still living. Pop was the first one to go, and then Bob this past year. After fifty or fifty-five years, eight out of the original ten still are around and able to make it to these reunions we have.

It also shows something about living in that tent and flying in those things. It built a bond that is stronger than anything else in your lives.

You're right. Exactly. You know, with our ten men, there was a real bond. The other crews, you could feel a bond to a certain extent, but the others didn't take pride in their group like we did.

You'd be flying on a mission and once in a while you'd get tired and just listen to what's going on in the plane area. You switch over your radio control and you can go on the intercom. You could switch over to bring in the head plane. You're not supposed to do this. You could hear the head honcho, the leader, Able 1 maybe: "You're fine, Able 7." You could hear Able 1 talking to Baker 1, or Charlie 1, or Dog 1, or talking to his two men on the wing and you hear him say, "Tighten up the formation." And all of a sudden, all these B-17s would come in. "Now stick that wing in my tail gunner's face," or something like that. It was kind of interesting to hear the jargon.

There's a motion picture coming out. I keep reading about it. I hope it comes out. It's about these gentlemen that flew P-51s and P-38s, I think it is. The Red Tails, from the big red rudders they had on their planes, from Tuskegee Institute down South. There was a big story about it in the paper.

It was an all black fighter group.

I want to tell you, those guys knew how to fly. I'd be in that tail position and we'd get an escort from P-51s to the bomb run. Those guys would come in. I'd see that red tail and I'd say, "These are the Black Gentlemen, they're coming in." He'd bring that P-51 in, get in some of our prop wash and bounce around. You'd see this big smile and those pearly teeth looking at you and you just felt good. And believe me, don't let anybody tell you those guys didn't know how to fly airplanes. Wow!

Our first mission was to Innsbrook. I'll never forget that one because it was the first

time I saw flack, or heard it, or felt it, or all three. It's hard to describe. The first time you feel it and hear it, it's just a "Floom!" As long as you hear that "Floom!" you were all right. But if it can't hear the "Floom," you must be hit someplace. They threw it up. They were very accurate in the Innsbrook area, that's right around the Brenner Pass. Those Germans would take those AA guns half way up the mountains in the Alps. Instead of shooting at you from the ground, sea level, which makes it twenty-seven thousand feet up, they might be at ten thousand feet, let's say. They got that much closer to you as you flew over in a bomb run.

All of your bombing missions were into Germany? You flew from Italy into southern Germany?

We bombed Germany or Austria, the Brenner Pass, and northern Italy. Northern Italy was still occupied by Hitler's forces and some of Mussolini's.

But normally we'd take off and circle the field getting into formation—Able, Baker, Charlie, and Dog Squadrons. It took a few big circles to get every squadron formed up.

That's four squadrons with seven planes each?

We had about twenty-eight in the group. Then we would take off across the Adriatic. Actually, our take off point was this little lake called Lake Lesina. You see it on the map every once in a while. It wasn't a big lake, the size of Tahoe or anything; it was more like Virginia Lake. We'd take off from Lake Lesina and fly across to the Yugoslavian coast line. You'd get to look down if it was a clear day. The fjords were beautiful. We'd fly along that edge of Yugoslavia and we'd come up to the top of the Adriatic Sea. You're over land now.

We'd either head for Vienna, which is always a tough target, or we'd go straight forward and cross the Alps and come around to our left to Regensburg, Salzburg, or continue on. One time we went up as far as Brux, I think it is—that was not too far from Berlin—and dropped our bombs. We, maybe, came up and followed the Danube River or something, north of the Alps.

How many missions did you fly?

Well, fifty-two missions or thirty-two sorties. Now you're going to say, what is the difference between a mission and a sortie? A mission was the original. You'd fly from the base to point A, the target, drop your bombs and come home. Or you'd fly to the target and not drop off your bombs and come home. But you'd get credit each time you did that for a mission. When you reached fifty missions, then you got sent home or got leave, or you were taken off flying duty. Well, they found out that too many men were going home. And they were going home on such things as maybe dropping their bombs out in the middle of the Adriatic, because of some emergency, and coming back and getting a mission credit for this. So about the time we got there they changed from missions to sorties. A sortie was when you went from your home base to the target; you must drop your bombs on the target. If you came back with your bombs, or you dropped your bombs for any other reason, or other than on the target, you didn't get any credit. It was a little tougher to get credit that way. One of our crew, John Henney, the navigator, flew a couple of missions with other crews as a fill in, so he got his complete thirty-five sortie tour in. I got thirty-two of my thirty-five in and then the war was over. I didn't fly any more after that.

You were going to tell the story of your first mission. What was the date of your first mission?

On 16 November 1944, we flew our first mission; quote, sortie. Munich was the target. We ended up dropping our bombs on the secondary target, not the primary, which was Munich. The secondary target was Innsbrook. The flack was heavy and Able One was shot down. Seemed like all hell broke loose. Planes were scattered all over the sky. We slowly got back into formation, forming back up on Able Two. We took off at seven-thirty in the morning and we landed at three o'clock that afternoon. It was a long day.

The next day we didn't fly. The day after that we flew again. That day's target was Vienna, Austria. Perfect mission. Very little flack for some reason. Schwartz didn't fly with us. He was sick and we flew with a co-pilot, name of Mazchech.

Whenever we had a mission scrubbed, it wasn't like we had a complete day off, believe me. They always waited to the very last minute before firing off the flares saying the mission was scrubbed. Up until the time it was scrubbed we—and I think I speak for the rest of the guys I flew with—put in three or four hours getting ready to fly. Let me give you the run down to show you what I mean. As a rule, the evening before we flew a mission, the battle order was posted at the base orderly room. Bucky was the one who went down and checked to see if we were flying.

If we were on the list to fly, Bucky would come back and tell us, "We're flying tomorrow fellows."

This is an actual day in the life of a tail gunner, you might say. Before turning in we'd shave, as this would speed things up in the morning. For some reason I never slept well the night before we were to fly. My mental

alarm would usually awaken me about three or four in the morning. As I lay there in the quiet darkness, I could hear Sgt. Hartwell coming down the line of tents bellowing out as he entered, "So and so's crew, it's O400 (or four o'clock in the morning). You're flying today, briefing at five, everybody up."

Then I'd hear his footsteps slopping through the mud, nearer and nearer to our tent. Then he would come through the door, to our tent, flashlight in hand. He rarely got past Sankovich's, our crew. At that point we'd greet him with, "Yeah, yeah, yeah . . . we hear you."

You'd get dressed with very little, if any, conversation. You'd grab your mess kit and head for the mess hall. You're hungry, but what happens to you if you go for that bacon and sausage and a couple of those plate size hot cakes? The guy behind you shoves in, no words. You move along. You end up with coffee, toast and a few canned peaches. That part of your day now complete, you return to the tent long enough to park your mess kit. Off you go with your flashlight in hand. You take your flashlight because you don't want to find any uncharted mud holes the hard way. You go to the base theater for a briefing on today's mission. The theater is full of flight crews, officers and enlisted personnel. Up on the stage is a very large easel. On it is a large map. It's covered up with a sheet, but you know it's a map because you've been here before. Everyone seems to be awake now, and as the briefing officer walks on the stage with a pointer in hand, some GI calls everyone's attention to a very large rat scurrying across the rafter high above the officer's head. The rat disappears into a hole and the briefing begins.

With a move like a toreador swinging his cape, off comes this sheet, revealing the target for the day. If it's a milk run, there's

hushed conversation; if the target's Vienna, it's quiet. You're then filled in on take off time, bomb load, altitude, fighter escort, and I.P. (which is initial point; that being the point where you turn and start your bomb run towards the target). Then you usually get a time check, so that everybody's on the same time.

Then you exit the building, pile into a GI truck, pick up your flight gear, and then out to the plane. It's still dark when you pull up to your plane. When we pull up to our plane we toss our bags out, jump down and start to put on our flight clothes. This consists of one, only, heated suit. This is worn over the clothes you already have on. It has a zipper up the front. In the area of your crotch protrudes a two foot long section of electrical cord with a male fitting on the end. This is plugged into an outlet in the general area of your position in the airplane. Over this goes your flight jacket, complete with fur collar, and finally a matching pair of pants.

At this point you find it hard to walk. You may be required to assist in pulling the props through. This not only gets the innards of the engine going on this cold morning, but your innards going, too. If we're lucky, the mission would be scrubbed at this point, or, as happened several times, scrubbed after "start engines" is called for. [Missions have been scrubbed] as late as just prior to taking off down the runway. If a flare was fired, telling everyone that the mission was scrubbed for that day, we would then reverse the above procedures back to, but not including, briefing. Now, that's what we'd do for four hours on a day that we weren't able to fly when they'd scrub the mission.

You said flights were as long as eight hours?

Yes.

When you first get in your plane, you have to get in position?

We take off and circle to our left to join up in formation with the rest of the squadron. Then we begin to get into our various positions. Mine being the tail position, I had the longer distance to go. I'm down on my knees, chest pack parachute being pushed ahead of me. Now, I'm down on my stomach at the tail wheel well. I pause long enough to push the chute far enough ahead of me so I can work around the tail wheel. Well, all I'm concerned about is my 190 pound bod—make that 200 pounds as I have on about ten pounds of cold weather gear. I slide into position, reach around to my rear and feel for a little piece of one by six wood that, when pulled up into place, would be my butt rest for the next eight hours or so. I'd hook on my chest chute, charge up my twin .50s, then call into Sankovich that his tail gunner is in place. There I am, in my little green house on my knees, butt resting back against a one by six, looking back at where we had been, or down on another squadron of B-17's.

We get the order to test guns. This is completed. Now we're given the order over the intercom from Lt. Schwartz to, quote, "Go on oxygen." We're at eleven thousand feet. We're now set to go to the target, drop our six thousand pounds of bombs that we are carrying, and head back home. It was 0800 hours when we took off. The more altitude we gained, the colder it got. We're going to be at twenty-six thousand feet when we come to the bomb run. Word from Henney, the navigator, was that the present temperature outside was minus fifty-five degrees centigrade. That's cold, believe me. We flew on towards the target over the snow-covered Alps and make a turn to the left. I hear Sankovich call Mills, the bombardier, to make ready. We are

approaching the IP. Our navigator Henney confirms this. At the IP we again turn slightly to the left. From my position, looking back where we had been, it was a turn to the right. On the intercom things were rather busy between Mills, Sank, and occasionally Leo would contribute. At this point Senter or Threet was usually busy throwing chaff out of the plane via the "chaff chute." Chaff looked like tinsel that you hung on a Christmas tree. It would hopefully jam the radar used by the German AA gunners to determine our altitude to send shells—flack—into our formation.

"Bombs away," called Mills. The plane jumps up from the release of all this weight. The bombs fall to earth, hopefully hitting our target.

"Where's the flack?" comes a voice from the intercom.

"There's none," is the welcome reply.

We turn for home, all of us feeling somewhat relieved. All at once there's flack popping all over, all around us. They really had us zeroed in. All I could hear was ka-boom, ka-boom, ka-boom. You could feel the plane bounce from the concussion of the shells as they exploded. I tried my best to role up like a sow bug. This was really scary. All at once I heard a pow-like sound. I was facing down and saw fragments of what looked to be glass all over my lap and the surrounding area. I raised my head to find that, it must have been, a piece of flack had come through my left greenhouse window, and at an angle that literally blew away the glass incased gun site that was mounted on top of my twin .50s. I quickly felt my arms. They were there. Then my face; no signs of blood. At this point I felt my oxygen mask; it was frozen solid with ice. I tore it off from my face. The inside of the mask was solid ice. I started to break it loose then suddenly realized that I had no oxygen. At this

altitude it doesn't take long before you're gone. I ripped the hose from my mask, stuck the end of the hose in my mouth, and reached over and set the oxygen flow indicator up a notch.

By now things were calming down. I heard Sankovich on the intercom call for a crew check. Each member of the crew would, in turn, call in his position and say OK. Everyone had checked in but me. I could hear Sank calling, "Tail gunner! Come in tail gunner! Are you OK?"

I was so busy sucking on the oxygen hose that I didn't realize that, when I tore off my mask, I also pulled off my throat mike. I could hear everyone but could not reply.

"Senter," barked Sankovich. "Put on the walk around bottle and go back and see what's wrong."

Senter replied, quote, "Before I do that let me try something." The next words I heard were, "Tail gunner, if you can hear me wiggle that big ass of yours." I did as he requested. "Waist gunner to pilot?"

"Pilot, here."

"Paul's OK. He just lost his throat mike. Over and out."

We landed some eight hours and forty-five minutes after taking off. What a day!

That mission was on March 1, 1945?

Yes. You may want to scrape this, but it's a good story. Gives you a real insight into the camaraderie that you talked about.

Yes.

March started off with a mission to Moose Bierbaum. We took off at six forty-five a.m. and landed some eight hours later; a long day, moderate flack. We received a sortie credit, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's go back in time that day, March 1, 1945, to

about six fifteen. We were all in our take-off positions on the floor of the radio room. We bounced along the taxi strip headed for take-off. Our flight position that day was Charlie Seven, better known perhaps as "Tail-End Charlie." Behind us came Dog Squadron, led by Dog One, Dog Leader, and so forth down the line. Back in the floor of the radio room, the five of us were sitting there. Reaber, our radio operator, sat at his little desk, head set on, listening to whatever was being said. The noise from the engine was so great that if you wanted to say something to the guy next to you, you had to scream in his ear, and then you couldn't be sure he heard you. All at once the door from the bomb bay opens. Coming through the bomb bay on the catwalk through the door, stands John Francis Henney, the navigator. I could not help but notice the look of desperation on his face. He bent down and spoke some words into Reaber's ear. Don looked at him and shook his head, signaling no. Don now beckoned Senter over. He says something into Senter's ear, Senter nods and takes off for the center area of the ship, Henney right behind him.

They seem to be looking for something, but what? I had to find out. I slid over to Don's desk, raised myself up, and yelled into his ear, "What's wrong?"

Don answered, "Henney has the GI's. They're back there looking for an empty ammo box."

From where I was seated I could see that they weren't having any luck in their search. All eyes were on the center area of the ship back by the waist area. Senter signals to Threet to come on back to join them. Threet gropes his way around the ball turret and joins them. At this point Senter yells something into Threet's ear. Lyman nods, yes. Now Senter yells something into Henney's ear. Somewhat reluctantly, Henney nods in agreement.

Knowing Senter, I say to myself, "He has a plan."

Now Senter positions himself at one side of the entrance doorway to the airplane in the waist, the center, section of the ship. Threet takes an identical position on the other side of the door. The door is about two by three feet in size. At this point, Henney drops his britches, places his right hand into Senter's right hand, his left hand into Threet's left hand, and hangs his touche out the open door that Senter's foot is holding in an open position against the planes "prop wash." [laughter] The look on John's face said it all: "Don't let go, please."

I feel a tap on my shoulder. Reaber's hands me his headset and signals me to put it on. This I do. Don has switched radio bands and is now on the group command frequency. I hear a voice say, "Charlie Seven," (that's us) "Charlie Seven, this is Dog Leader. Come in, over."

Now I hear Sankovich, "Dog Leader, this is Charlie Seven. This is Charlie Seven, over."

"Yes, Charlie Seven, Dog Leader here. Thought I'd let you know that your waist area entrance door is open. And . . . it appears to me that someone's bare ass is hanging out the door, over."

Long pause.

"Yes, Charlie Seven here. Thanks, I'll check into it. Over and out."

I handed the headset back to Reaber and sure enough, Sank is asking Don on the intercom, "What in the 'H' is going on back there?" Don filled him in.

Henney was pulled back in. Looking relieved, he made his way past us sitting there on the floor of the radio room. There, but for the grace of God, could have been any one of us.

You said that Vienna was a place that you didn't like as a target.

That was a big city and heavy with flack guns. They'd just be everywhere. Really, when you bombed Vienna, you could expect flack to be heavy enough that, in a sense, you could literally get out and walk on it. Vienna was a tough target. Regensburg was a tough target; that's where Adolf had his little retreat up in the Alps.

We had a mission to Vienna. We had lost a thermal charger booster on one engine and we couldn't get up the altitude. Sankovich wanted in the worst way to get credit for this mission, after coming all this way. As we came down the bomb run, we were about three thousand feet below where we should be, and about four miles back behind the group, all by ourselves. I could see where we had been, and could listen on the intercom, and hear what's going on up ahead. We were running late because of weather and the bum thermal charger booster. One group was coming this way at this altitude and one group was coming this way at a higher altitude. It all took time and we were running late.

Did they always do that? Planes at different altitudes would come from different directions?

Yes. They were really going to blow someplace up and they wanted to hit Vienna. We were late coming and we were below a group coming in. And this guy—from what crew I don't know—was right on schedule. So I'm listening, looking where we had been, so I didn't see this, but as our group came in this way, this one came this way. They dropped their bombs right on schedule. Apparently they didn't see the guys below. A bomb hits Able One. The bombs from Able One, plus the bomb that hit them, makes a pretty messy sky. I hear the voices up front screaming, "God! Did you see that?"

"Yeah! What exploded?"

And I'm saying "Jeez, what's happened? Did anybody see a parachute?" I think they saw three or four parachutes come out.

Sankovich was doing evasive action, I remember. He just hollers to Mills on the intercom, "Tommy, drop the bomb. I don't care if we hit a haystack, let's get the hell out of here," which we did.

But the interesting part to me of that whole thing, of those four parachutes that got out—the plane probably exploded because of the percussion from the bombs going off—three of those four that got out of the ship came marching into the camp back in Foggia about six weeks later. They had been passed along. The way the turret told me, when they came out of that parachute jump, they had a very soft landing. They hit a snow covered hillside and they just slid down the snow. Some of the friendlies there in the Vienna area picked them up and passed them along the line through Yugoslavia. They got down to a point where they could just come right across the Adriatic to home base. And I'll tell you, it was a surprise to see those guys walking in.

I'll bet. Where were you when Germany surrendered?

I was there, in Foggia. I think the rumors were kind of hot and heavy along about the very end of April that year, 1945. In fact, we had taped a notice to this big bulletin board. "This squadron is now non-operational until further notice." The scuttlebutt was that something happened. Well, it did happen about four or five days later; everything ended. And we had a nice celebration there, such as it was.

Then word was that the crews were to be split up. The gunners would all go home and be retrained for B-29's and go into the Pacific area. Pilot, copilot, navigator, and radio man

would take the B-17 to a certain point. They would strip all the guns out, the ball turret and everything, and put in wooden benches inside the plane. These planes, B-17's, would be used to ferry troops home. That's exactly what happened.

Gunners were sent to the 301st Bomb Group to await crewing up with other personnel to fly home. We finally got our orders and we flew home in a B-24 bomber. We flew from Foggia to Goia, Italy; then Merrakech; Morocco to Dakar, French West Africa; then across the pond to Natal, Brazil. The next stop was Georgetown, British Gyana.

We lost an engine over the rain forest area there. We had to land at Belem, Brazil, which is right on the mouth of the Amazon River. We were there for two weeks. It was a nice vacation, believe me. They flew in another engine so we could change the engines. We went from there to British Gyana where we stayed the night in barracks that were up on about ten foot stilts. They had a lot of undesirable animals around that area, high tide comes in too, and they put you up on stilts. Then we went from there to Puerto Rico to Florida to Charleston, S.C., where we dumped the plane and got processed.

From there we got on a train. This troop train car was attached to the last car. I had forgotten that the Southern Rail, like the Daylight and the City of San Francisco, which was with us, was a first class train in those days. Chattanooga, Tennessee, was one of these stops where you'd back in. They're backing up at an early hour in the morning and all these people are coming by, and here's this troop carrier car, which looked kind of like a freight car. All these GI's get up and stand there in their shorts and skivvies; lucky they had that on, you know. They had all this graffiti on all over the car, and everything.

And you'd see the guys, "Good Lord! Where are we?" It was just another humorous thing.

I made my way on furlough back home. From that furlough I went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. From there they sent me to Deming, New Mexico. I was given the job of being a PT instructor for the officers on the base. And that lasted for about, well, four weeks to six weeks. We were on a point system. In order to get out of the Army, or the service, you had to have accrued so many points. You got points for overseas duty, you got points for flying duty, medals, whatever it was. I had eighty-three points. I think they started letting them out with about ninety or a hundred points, so I had a little time to cool my heels. Finally, eighty-three points came up and I was given orders to take the first train and head for McClellon Field in Sacramento. From there I was discharged.

I've skipped something.

What?

I wanted to say that when I got that furlough, coming home after the war, and was off for thirty days, I had a great time. I phoned Margaret and my family and had a lot of fun. I was begging my wife to let me go back and train for the South Pacific, but the day that I went back, off furlough, was the day that the war ended in the Pacific . . . VJ Day. We were back at the base and I was to go home that night. I got on this Reno bus from Berkeley. My dad was coming home from work in San Francisco and Margaret was coming home, she worked at the Army depot there in Oakland. They both met me at the bus and my dad said, "You should be in San Francisco, they're tearing the town apart."

Anyway, we said a hurried goodbye and I said, "I'll write you and let you know what's going to happen."

Then this bus went to Vallejo. If you've ever been to Vallejo, it's a Navy town. And they thought that San Francisco was rocking! Boy, I'll tell you, we took an hour just to get through on the highway, there. They were tearing the place apart. In Sacramento, the same thing. We got to Delle and everything was calm, everyone kind of put the kibosh on the celebration there. But that was the end of the war in the Pacific.

Then, getting back to the other, I want to McClellon, I got my honorable discharge, and was paid whatever the country had coming to me. The only thing I didn't have to sign a "Statement of Charges" for was my Air Force dark glasses and my Air Force fur-lined flight jacket. I said, "Well, possession is nine tenths of the law." And I was out of the service.

Where did you go? You went back to . . .

Back to Berkeley . . .

You worked with Woolworth's when you were in high school.

Yes. I went back to Woolworth's. I had decided to try out retail. Earlier, you asked what did you do when you got out of the service? What did you decide you wanted to be? Well, things were pretty tough in those days. I mean, the unemployment lines were long. And I, in fact, said, "Well, I'm going to go on unemployment." I got as far the door and I saw the lines and I said, "The hell with this. I'm going to see if I can go up and work for Woolworth's part time." Which I did.

Then, the first thing you know, I got interested in the Woolworth's school. They had a training program and you could be a manager and make all kinds of big money. I took that route and started a thirty-eight year career with Woolworth's. The biggest

and best thing that ever happened to me with Woolworth's was when I was appointed manager of the Park Lane Center store.

Is that when you came to Reno?

That was when I came to Reno.

To open that store? In 1967?

I hit town on June 5, 1967. I'll never forget it; snowing like crazy on June 5. I couldn't get over it. We opened the store for business July 31, 1967. The Reno High Band and the Mayor was down there. A lot of the dignitaries from the company were up there. Beautiful little store, but . . .

Did you retire here in Reno from Woolworth's?

I did. I retired from Woolworth's in 1977.

People didn't pay much attention to stress after the Second World War. Most people, even in writing letters home, couldn't always express what they were feeling and what they were seeing. The tension and the kind of life that you led there . . .

Right.

To come back and be a clerk in Woolworth's after what you had lived through couldn't have been an easy transition.

It wasn't. You're right. I'm glad you brought that up. It was not easy. You just weren't sure what you wanted to do. If you wanted to go up to Cal, or were you going to go to the university; it's right at the front door and you could live at home. Then you get up there and it's so big and it's . . . You know, you can't get acclimatized back from

overseas and bombing and a whole lot of other stuff. The transition back, you can't do it just like that. I found that, after a year up at Cal, "Something's wrong here."

So I went back with the Woolworth's company and that's how I kind of got back into the swing of things. Also, when I first came back, I can remember many, many, times talking with my dad, with my brother, who was in the service, too, and my mother over a dinner table in the evening, and telling them some of the things that I couldn't write about.

I didn't write this book here until a year ago, fifty years later. They're both passed away now and my brother, too. I'd loved to have had this so that they could understand what this was all was about. These little sessions we had, it seems to take some of the pressure off, you know what I mean? Like, when they had this bombing in Oklahoma City, they had trauma sessions and so forth. This was my trauma session. Talking it out with my folks or

Were your folks interested? Because lots of men say that nobody wanted to listen.

My folks were very good at listening . . . very good, especially when it was something that they had heard about, "Was it true this . . . ? Did you do this, or did you have to do that?" And they were honest. I could tell they wanted to know. I and my folks had been close friends. Margaret was my best. Margaret's folks, my in-laws But it all helped get it out. Then life became livable again. You just had to clear the air out a little bit, you know.

Did you have any anger? Did you feel angry?

No.

You're shooting at people and they're shooting at you and you're solving problems in a different way than you could when you were back in the United States.

Oh, yes. You'd kind of take some of the frustrations out, while overseas, if you're using your guns. But you don't know who the hell the guy is. You don't know him from Adam.

In 1979, I had the first reunion here in Reno with my crew. I didn't tell you about that one. It was just a private little get together. One of my friends here in town knew Evert Adams, this German pilot that flew in World War II, so he says, "Can I bring him over?" Well, he came over; very nice gentleman. And Sankovich was a little feisty and this guy and Sank damned near got, you know, into a little fisticuffs, an altercation. But he calmed down. By the time that they were ready to leave, they went out, walking down the drive way, I remember, with their arms on each other's shoulder. But the frustration Bob had, we all had.

At times you wanted to say to yourself, "Gee, I wonder if we did all this?" You come home and you got this: Why can't we find a job? Why do they have all these unemployment lines? Why did they stop all the war effort so abruptly that all these people are out of work? Back comes GI Joe, so to speak, and he's about tenth in line. They used to say if you're a veteran, you'd get priority, to a certain point, for a job. You're a veteran, but the other guy's got six kids that he's trying to raise, too.

Is there any kind of a summary thing that you would like to say about war?

Well, I'll tell you, I feel stronger for having gone through it. I hope we'll never

have to go through it again. And I sincerely mean it. If people today, with the mess that you see all around us, if they could just go one day on one mission or in one battle or a little fight, or whatever it is, and could see what a mess a war is

BRUNO M. ROMERO

Ken Adams: We can start by you telling me where you were born, and what year, and something about your family.

Bruno M. Romero: I was born in Italy July 30, 1925, in a small town in Piedmont; name is Saliceto. And I stay in that town. Altogether I have me and my two brothers. Naturally, my mother was a housewife and my father was a sailor. I live there until 1933. In 1933 we moved to Genoa, where my father was sailing from. All the time he was going to Spain in a small ship and weekly was coming to Genoa. So we moved to Genoa mainly because he was home. He was in his house more often. And in Genoa, my brothers—I had two brothers at that time—one was born in 1922 so he was older than I was, and one three years younger, born in 1928

What were your brothers' names?

One was Mario, and Giuseppe was the youngest at that time. In 1934, in Genoa, I have a fourth brother and his name was

Vanni. So from there we start the life in a big city. Our town where I was born was about a thousand people. We were in a city that had—I would say at that time—about six hundred thousand people.

Big city for a little boy from the country

Yes. All the time was a big, big city. Naturally, in the big city you have big buildings, typically about six stories high. And that started all my life in the big city.

You went to school in Genoa?

Yes. I started out in the first two grades where I was born. After there, I started the third grade until the fifth grade. You have to go to school five grades. It was the custom. After that you can go to work. Eleven years old you can go to work. From there you can go to school after work if you choose to become more specialized, you know, for three years. [laughter] After that you can go to some technical schools for another four years, or

some classic schools. From there you'll be able to enter in the university.

Did you start to work at eleven?

No, I went to school for three years. I wanted to work on the ships, see. And after the war started in 1940, June 10, 1940, just two or three months before, I went on a big ship that was coming to New York. That was my first working trip.

While I was thirteen I came once to New York for training on a big ship. And so I started, but things in my family, they start to get very difficult because my mother, she came up with cancer. That was very difficult—the daily life. That was about when the war started.

During the depression, did your father make a good living as a merchant marine?

Sailor, yes. You're talking about 1932. That's why we moved to Genoa. Because to him to come to the town he has to pick up two trains. They didn't give him all that time off, you know. About once a month he was coming home for two or three days.

When you lived in Genoa, he could come home once a week?

He likes to go with the ship.

But he, for the time, made good pay?

The pay was enough to live—paid the rent and [for food to] eat and all that. At that time it was more costly to live. When we live on this small town, we didn't have no electricity, no heat, no nothing, see. So, I mean, naturally, you don't have any bills to pay. When we were living in Genoa, we had a bulb coming down

from the ceiling for the electrical. And you cook on a gas stove, and a wood stove, too.

Did you live in a building with a lot of apartments?

Yes. That was a low income apartments owned by the city. And so the rent was more modest. We qualified to live in the apartments.

Your mother got cancer about 1940?

Yes, I know [the cancer] started in 1939 and that's when the war started.

What was your mother's name?

Teresa. And she died on April, 1941. I was sixteen still, after. I took care of the family quite a bit because she couldn't get out of the bed. So I have to cook. I had to provide, you know, for everybody, see. I was going to give my mother her shots of morphine when she was really in pain.

You had been an apprentice for the merchant marines?

The war in Italy started June 10, 1940. We got back from New York, I think we landed in Naples, toward the end of May. We picked up some troops on the ship to take to an island called Sardinia and down in Libya, to Tripoli. I made two trips. The crew of the ship went on.

What was your job on the ship?

Well, my job was kind of around that three years of school that I went to. I learn, some English and some French, languages. It was a regular school; arithmetic, and history and all that. But the specialization was that when you got to doing that school, you're going

with this big passenger ship working on the first class component of the ship. It used to be three classes; first, second, and third class. In the first class you take the passengers on day to day tours. And some time you clean their rooms. The first class room, they always be clean, you know and things like that. That was kind of a school that makes you Because I want to go on the ocean.

When I went to Genoa the first time I saw the ocean there. I always remember that morning I see the ocean. I wanted to go see what there is behind the horizon. That was my dream. And so from there it started. But after, I did a lot of things. Then when after the war started, you know, things they got And after when my mother died, things they got very, very bad for us.

You were out of the merchant marines when your mother died? Were you working?

Yes, at that time I was working on the shipyard. They call me to go on a ship to bring the troops in Africa, in Libya. And some way, some how, when they called my number, it was on the newspaper. They call you, you got the qualifications and the number, when it comes your turn, you go over there and you go on the ship. And somewhere along the line I say no, because I was planning to go to school some more. And beside, I know I remember my excitement, I think my mother was sick from that. But anyhow, that ship I was supposed to go in, I have a couple of friends on it. They went on that ship and it sunk about two or three days later. Troops on the Mediterranean, you know, going to Libya. And this two friends of mine, they died.

You were lucky?

I was very pleased on that day. The most serious thing during the war; I don't know life

had much value, because too many people, they were dying. I was starving. That's one thing. I think after my mother died, we have no soup to eat. For my father and us four boys, it was hard. You eat a little bit, but you were always hungry.

At night I went to steal the food on the farms, on the outskirts of the city. And that was normal. [laughter] About four or five of us, at night, [would go together]. We take the train way, you take one of those cars and they take you on the outskirts. With the moon you are able to see at night.

We see people. I remember that there was a lady, next door, an old, big lady. She was just skin and bones. You don't see no more dogs around, no more cats. They all disappear because if we find those animals at that, that would be the end of it, see. [laughter]

There weren't any jobs for you?

Yes, jobs during the war, it was fine some jobs, like on this shipyard, you know. But after I start to go to school on the evening To go to a school was more sophisticated, you know, [it gives you] kind of a high school degree. But doing that was tough. I had to study Latin, and Italian literature, because the writing was very important. But anyhow, I prepare myself on the evening. At that time I am given an exam. I ask because I want to become a merchant marine officer, see. There is two kinds of officers on the merchant marine ships. Naturally, I'm talking about at that time. We study to be a deck officer, or an engineer. And that is a big step on the future or on a job. You have a uniform, you know, and all that. I was able to enroll in that school.

The problem was, after my mother died, that's July 1941, in 1943 my father remarried. Over there you don't accept that. And so my father moved from the apartment and he

took with him my younger brother, which at that time in 1943 was nine years old, and he took another one that was about fourteen, fifteen years old. But my older brother and I, we stayed.

You were eighteen by this point?

Exactly. Eighteen is when, that has been kind of a really turbulent life. We had the Christmas vacation. I found a job during Christmas vacations. You have summertime. I found a job in summertime. I was working on this ship. I remember that I had to earn some money. We're repairing some steel plates. He had some hot coals there. I told him to burn them. I did that so I be able to go to school. I'm going to get paid. I got hurt, so finally I went to the company. They had a place where if you got hurt they kind of take care of you. I went home and I tried to keep this burn kind of rotten by putting on some rotten leaves, like old lettuce. They told me that that would get to the things going. You know what to take. You know what to get well. So I went off for two or three months with that and I got the pay. My brother and I would be able to, you know, pay the expenses and go on. I was going back to school.

We were, naturally, smuggling, you know. One night, while I was living about two quarters of a mile away, there was a deposit of bombs. We had an bombardment. They came quite often to bombard the city. They were English airplanes. Because the Americans, they didn't get involved yet; it was pretty close, anyhow, because Italy quit the war, officially, September 8, 1943. But anyhow the bombs exploded. Those bombs, they had a ring of copper about a quarter of an inch thick in every bomb. But what we were doing, we took the chisel and the hammer and we take that copper out. There is the winery that will make

wine. And they *must* have copper to have the grapes growing. But with the copper they make a substance, I think probably with the water or something like that, and that's when they spray it on the winery some way. If we got copper we could get an exchange for any food that we wanted. And the most precious food at that time—it was like gold—was the olive oil. We're talking about no money, because money was a big mess. But a friend of mine got killed. A bomb exploded and he died there.

You took the examination. Did you get into the school?

Yes. It was supposed to be four years. So I start in 1942, [and go to school during] 1943, 1944, 1945. Yes, I got to go to the school.

It was a lot of bombardments, in general. You see what I'm saying. At night they started. They come and there was a lot of bombs around. It was a big mess.

So the school, it was a tough school. I have five boys over here and they all went to school. I remember they went to high school. Some way, some how for practical purposes, I never see them study. I used to get up at three or four o'clock in the morning because I didn't have time in the evening to finish my homework. So I had to get up before school—two or three hours before—I had still to study. And every day was mathematics. Oh, I don't remember the name of the complicated mathematics. [I studied] English, foreign languages and literature. Anyhow, it was hard. To pass over there you have ten grades, from one to ten. You got to have a six to pass. If you have a five then you are reexamined; they give you another examination before the school starts in October. They give you an examination in September. Otherwise, you got to go through the year. There's a lot of people that are flunking; I would say about twenty percent

in the class. Over there, school was a pain on the butt.

That's why, after fifty years, I wonder if I'm reflecting, the very But that's what I remember and how I remember.

Anyway, with these friends of mine, I mean we had it good enough. The friends were very valuable, you know, and things like that. Because, particularly after my mother died, things like that were hard. I finish this school. I had a uniform.

You went to school to become an officer. Were you a deck officer?

No, an engineer. Because engineer was easier. The strategy is to become a deck officer because a deck officer is becoming a captain. But the engineer, you become chief engineer.

In the fall on 1945, in Genoa, the war finish. The Americans, they came in April 27, 1945. Mussolini came back after Italy quit the war. So when he started the war, again, everybody, they didn't like it anymore. That's my feeling. Italy quit the war, officially, after Mussolini went away from Italy. I don't remember exactly if they tried to kill him, I think he went to Germany or something like that with Hitler. But when Italy declared surrender to the Allies, that was September 8, 1943. After Mussolini got back to Italy, he got ideas there were German troops and the Fascists, people that were supporting Mussolini. And also there was the other part that was against him. It was kind of a revolution, see.

But the Germans . . . some people that I knew, they disappeared. They closed the streets and particularly the young people, they take you and they ship you away. They have that war environment. All the people they disappear—young people. You see these German soldiers walking on the streets. I still

remember the noise they were making. They were marching on the street with the steel on their boots. And the streets they were not paved at that time. They were just all rocks, flat rocks. And at night you hear marching, most curious how you know. Things like that.

What was your brother doing while you were going to school?

He was working. What happened to him? Well, even until 1943 he was working at that time on a hotel. He went the same school that I went to the three years. I think as some kind of a specialized waiter, you know. And the reason that he didn't join the army, they didn't take him. And why they didn't, I tell you that. I think he had some heart problems. Mostly they die young. So he was working and helped out. Many times I worked by myself at home. He was earning money, enough to where he was helping me, really good. That was in 1943.

The war started with the Germans, with the Fascists, with Mussolini back. And naturally, I was going to school but I remember I was working in the summertime, summer 1943.

When Germany started to do all that, they were blocking particularly the squares of the city and they were picking up everybody. They put them on a train and they were going to Germany. And they created an environment, I think, that was very fearful. So in early 1944, probably was April or May, I joined German company that was building the defenses in south of France. And they took me to Cannes. So I went to work for the Germans. And the idea was, I'm safe and they pay me. Wasn't a job. It was with a German company but was controlled by the German soldiers. We were digging ditches. They fill these ditches with water so that in case they, the Allies, invade the south of France, they want ditches there.

I mean they weren't wide. They were about fifty feet wide. They fill it with water about six feet deep so the tanks, they couldn't cross those ditches. Something like that. So I went there. August 18, 1944, that evening before, the bombing from the American and English Navy [started]. They were bombing like hell, but not in Cannes, they were bombing toward Marseille. We saw all the fire.

In the morning of August 18, there was a German sergeant there; an old German sergeant. He must have been about fifty years old. He said, "Well kids . . ." in Italian they said it, more or less, "Go home." We walk from Cannes to Savona. It took us eighteen days. And we took pictures.

There are about five or six of you?

We were four of us. August 18, U.S. Armed Forces landed in south of France. I walk from France to Savona, Italy, and we took a train to Genoa. We were working in south of France for the German defense. We didn't have no bags, nothing. We walked for eighteen days.

What did you eat?

Well, we'd find the food on the trees. We were asking for the food, and that's one thing that I always have remembered is some way, some how . . .

Because after that I went to the partisan units, see. The reason is because I don't want to take a chance in being involved with the Germans or the Fascists. I was afraid. So I went in. We knock at some doors to sleep, back when I was a partisan, but never, nobody ever refuse us, to give us a place to sleep or something to eat.

You were just four young Italian boys walking back to Italy. You spoke a little French because you'd been studying French.

Oh yes, that was a good thing when we were in France. We didn't have nothing with us, see, nothing.

And after we got out of the train and I got home [I found out that] my best friend—his name is Attilio; my older son his second name is Attilio—he got killed in a bombardment in Genoa. That really kind of shook me up, you know.

My brother, I didn't see my brother, my older brother. Nobody knew where he was. A few days later a man knocked on my door. He gave me a piece of paper and he's telling me where my brother was. He was with the partisan units on the mountains and he told me to join them. And that's what I did.

Did you see your father at all after he got married again?

Yes, that's another thing, see. After forty-four years I'm living over here and thinking about my father and what he did. He did nothing wrong, but we were mad at him . . . very mad.

He was still a young man.

Actually, he was forty-three. My mother was five years older than he was. My mother, she was born in 1888 and my father in 1893. My mother died in 1941. He was forty-eight years old when he remarry. And here was a beautiful lady. She never be married before, you know, things like that.

Naturally, I was there when my father died. My brother bought a place on the cemetery and is one of the—they say, and I believe it—is one of the most beautiful cemeteries there in Europe. But anyhow, my brother bought a place on the outside. Italy passed a law that you can come buy only for fifty years. But in 1941 is forever. My

brothers of mine and I, we went over there when my father died. We took my mother's remains and that was illegal because we were supposed to wait thirty years. You cannot touch the box before thirty years. That was twenty-nine years because my father died in 1970 and my mother died in 1941. We talk nicely with the guy, "OK, you guys do it. OK." We got a couple of men and we took the coffin of my mother. We opened the casket and we took all her bones. Now that's an experience, you know. You see that body of your mother twenty-nine years later. But then some way, some how, we handle. The step-mother, naturally we were the bosses. I don't understand but she couldn't say nothing, his wife, you know. We bury, we put my mother, the remains, in a metal box and we throw in the same place. And the metal box it fit there.

You put your mother's remains in a small metal box?

Oh, yes, a small metal box. I remember she was all bones. She was still in the dress which I remember when we bury her. She has only just a little flesh. Anyway, she fell apart, her teeth, as we move it. Everything fall out because it was only bones. But the dress was still there. The bones, they got all kind of decomposed.

What were we talking about?

You were talking about how you felt about your father remarrying.

I feel that my father was just a beautiful person. I mean to be honest. I never forget. The war with debt was totally unfair, totally.

Your father stayed in Italy?

Oh, yes, in Genoa.

There were two brothers

The younger brothers, they were living with [my father].

What did they do afterwards? Did they come to the United States?

Well, no after the war. What happened, see, my older brother went to Argentina. And after he went I went to Argentina on what was the first Italian ship that went to Argentina after the Second World War. I was working on that ship. I was really lucky because we were three of us and the captain chose the name of [one of the] three of us, and he picked up my name. I have the first job after the Second World War in Genoa on a passenger ship.

My brother left about ten days earlier for Argentina on a Spanish ship. Eventually my younger brother went to Argentina. Naturally the youngest, he went to a very classic high school. Over there they call it *lycee*. You got a degree from *lycee*, you become a classic person. [laughter] Do you know what I'm saying? You really study Greek and Latin and all the literature. If you got a degree from a *lycee*, you can go to the university. You can be admitted in any field that you want. With my high school to work on the ships, I can't. I can only go in a couple places.

One brother came back to Italy and I came to the United States. When I change the line [of ship's I was working on] from Argentina to New York, on one of the first ships, in 1948, that's when I met my wife, see. She was a passenger. [laughter]

She was a passenger going from Italy to the United States?

Yes, she was born in Reno. She went with her mother to go to Italy to see her

grandparents. Two or three years later I came over and we got married.

What was your father's name?

Giovanni.

When you joined the partisans, what was it like?

We spend about one year on the partisan unit on this type of a country, which was isolated. We were over here, around Casanova. Our group was about 110 kids. We had weapons, machine guns. And the Americans, they were bringing us, at night, food, cigarettes, ammunition, much—you name it, anything.

The Germans, they were there, too. And also the Fascists, the Italians, they were back with Mussolini, you know. They worked together with the Germans, see. Some way we were kind of to go where they were, which they were close by. You have to listen to radio and you hear somebody speaking in Italian. I didn't know but there was a guy with me that he knew. He was writing down what he was saying, like, "Today I'm going on that town Arsizio and I'm going to buy some chickens," something like that. That one translated, that was a code. The code tell you which kind of fire we got to build to receive the airplanes' provisions. And also the distance of the fire, [the code would be] like a "Z." Sometimes we put one fire, two fire, three fire. And sometimes we miss the fire on the line, in between. The plane is usually about a couple of planes. And sometimes we see them really flying but they don't drop nothing. So someway along the line on the radio they are telling you what happened. And then next night, naturally we collected. And after they drop

they see what we had. And you talk about food! [laughter] But anyhow, we were kind of hiding.

You weren't trained soldiers. You weren't at least.

No, naturally we didn't have no training. I don't remember, you know, fifty years after. I'm trying to figure out what we were doing. But what we were doing there is to stay out of sight from the Germans and the Mussolini guys. You sit there and say, well, there's no way we are an offensive [force], see. We were no going after where the Germans were. The Germans, they were coming everywhere.

They were looking for you?

Yes.

And your job was just to stay away from them?

And I remember that once I was with a friend of mine. I was patrolling there and we saw some Germans, and some Italians together on this mountain. They were controlling a pass, like Mt. Rose Summit. We were staying always in somebody's house, not the same house. Or we were sleeping on the bench or where the cow was under the house. Actually, that was nice and warm on the straw. That's where we slept. And everybody helped us, everybody. We never have no family say no.

The Americans, they came in Genoa April 27, 1945. That's when they came in Genoa. I don't know if we got [back from France] before the Americans or after. I don't remember. It was about the same time, anyhow. The Germans, they laughed. Most of the Fascists and the guys of Mussolini, they all disappeared. Things like that.

There was something there, though, that I forgot to tell you—was that in 1944, on the early months of 1944, every Sunday between 9:30 and 10:30 in the morning there were about three or four bombers and they came to bombard Genoa, every Sunday same time. I never found out what their . . . And they were bombing *nobody*. They were bombing in the middle of the city. Right always on the middle of the city. And I never understood that one. And when I came over here in Reno, I met Archie. He was in charge of the bombs on one of those planes. And Archie was one of about three or four airplanes, and the captain of the flight [would tell them] when to drop the bombs. Andy would drop the bombs. He didn't know where he was. You see what I'm saying, kind of strange. And that was lot of people that died.

What ways do you think the war changed the world? What's different about the world?

Well, the world is richer—money-wise.

Why is that?

Well, everybody has cars. My wife has a car; I have a car; my kids, each one has a car. Some, they have two cars. That's why I wonder if it's a positive thing or not. No question about it, this is the richest country of the world. But that doesn't mean they are the happiest people in the world. [laughter] I don't think they are happy. They are not, I'm sure.

How about your children and your cousins in the village in Italy that you came from? Which do you think are happier?

We went last year—a niece of mine got married—to this wedding that took them a year to prepare. [laughter] I took *all* my kids and my grandkids at that wedding in Italy.

We went, twelve of us, to the wedding. It was a beautiful trip, a beautiful experience. The only thing that I can say on that, seeing them there and the way they were living—I don't know if you call it an attitude or something else—but I saw them smiling more than over here. That's about it, I guess.

Is the war gone from Italy? Is there anything left that you see that reminds you of the war?

There's the theater, the opera theater in Genoa. It has been demolished by bombs. There is a bomb on the Cathedral Genoa from the English Fleet from February, 1941. They started to bomb Genoa from these battleships and one bomb hit the cathedral and did not explode. So that bomb, they still have it on the cathedral. Naturally, they probably disarmed it.

Maybe you could talk about the future. Are we going to have another war like the Second World War?

No. That experience, that is doubtful that will ever happen again; it will never happen again.

We solved the atomic bomb; it scared everybody.

Yes. There are too many people right now, you know. If there's some other way, like they are doing now and they're trying to talk, negotiate and things like that, the tendency is that they're going to talk.

What about when everybody's gone who remembers? What about in another fifty years when nobody can remember what it's like to have a war?

I wonder, because naturally I believe we are humans and make mistakes. I don't

know. [laughter] We want to read the books, but the books don't describe how the people live. The Second World War was a terrible thing. Europe was a disaster. I mean it was incredible. Life was like it was. You see a truck full of bodies, "Oh, big deal," and keep walking. [laughter] What would we gain?

Is there anything else about the war that I didn't ask you that you want to talk about?

You had to do something that was work so that you are kind of more secure. Nobody's going to grab you and ship you to someplace that you never come back.

My best friend died in a bombardment.

What was his name—your best friend?

Artuo.

What was the name of the school that you graduated from?

Institute de Mal l'Ecole. I'm getting old because I ought to remember that school very well. [laughter] When I go over there I always go see it. I know exactly . . . but the school is there. I went to see it just last year. There's still somebody going to school there; at that time it was full.

I don't know what it is, but I just like to walk, because the cities are still the same, most of it is still the same. Well, I used to walk in places. Naturally it changes quite a bit. There's a lot of new buildings. You don't see any more of those ships on the harbor anymore. Nothing's there.

There's no more shipping out of the harbors?

No. There are just a few ships. They use another system. The harbor is too small for

this system that they are using. So they made the new harbor, north of the old harbor, they have built another harbor. But this harbor comes all the way to over here and they got this petroleum, and this modern freighting system to load and unload.

I always go to see those places, you know, things like that.

In 1962 you went to Italy and that's when you went to visit the partisans?

I saw people, like a friend of mine in Santos. And he had been a partisan, too, and he has been wanted. Actually, he carried all this burden since for that long. Still, fifty years after, he feels it, you know, the pains of that war. And this friend of mine came here. He went to two grades of school—first or second grades. He came over here, to Los Angeles, about the same time as I came. He made a fortune. [laughter] I mean he lives in a house in Beverly Hills. And I tell you, just that house, I bet, is a million and one half dollars.

Do you think the war made immigrants like you better able to succeed?

The desire is really the thing if you want to do something or if you want to become something. Like, I want to be independent, no question about it. And I want to go back to the old country. And that costs money if I work for somebody. The first trip I went back to the old country from here, I stayed there seven months and I got a business going over here. But if I work for somebody with two kids, you cannot go on a trip like that—no way. So if I want to go, want to be independent, I have to work. I don't know what you call it, but it was easy. The only time that I see that they came over here, and fail, I don't get it. I don't understand it; why it is or things like that.

But probably we [immigrants] see *something*. And, you know, how you do things . . . how you do You go to school.

Well, my kids went to all kinds of schools. And I like to say, "You don't want to go to school to make money, because you need some kind of a spirit for that." [laughter]

Maybe you see better as outsiders. Maybe you saw better what to do.

There is no way really to explain yet. I had a wonderful experience, no question about it. Came over here; it was too easy.

From the time you were about fourteen years old, you had to be taking care of yourself. You always had to be figuring out how to survive and how to take care of yourself.

Oh, yes. You've got a point there. Maybe there is something on that. And these friends of mine, they went through similar things. I don't know if that was something to do with that. We started very early—very, very, very early—to deal with life, you know. I don't know. Maybe that's what it is. I'll have to think about it.

You were talking, at one point, about the Americans actually capturing Genoa, and the Germans leaving at about the same time the partisans came out of the mountains.

Yes.

Did the Americans have some way to recognize you, some sort of a signal, so they knew you were the partisans?

I don't know, exactly. One morning I was walking the main street—I don't know what I was doing—with a friend of mine and another

member came in. She thought it was about two, three days after the Americans came in. And there was this jeep with two, three guys on it and they said, "Hey, come over, come over!" They stopped right there.

"Sure."

I said, "Stop here, I'm going to eat," because I knew some English because I study some, you know.

They took us to their place, where they have all the [Americans]. And they were having breakfast, it was a kind of a breakfast buffet. They ask, "What do we do out here? Who are we?" Just because we went there, you know, we can pick up anything we want. We got in and that was the first time in my life, and still today, that I was shocked by the food I had seen. I never seen so much food in my life. So we ate with them. I remember we were talking. I don't know if it was in English or Italian; maybe another two were talking. This friend of mine, had never seen them. [laughter] I'll never forget that, because that was too much. And before we left, they took us back to give us, each one, bagged food; good things—chocolate, candies, all that stuff. All that, and there was nothing to eat. [laughter] I'll tell you something, that's why there was a war. [laughter]

Being a partisan helped with the Americans. You got more food, and you got more recognition.

We were defending ourselves, naturally, because we had machine guns and stuff like that. Once with a friend of mine, we went to look where the Germans and the Italians are. That was kind of strange, you know, but we went over there and, naturally, we weren't walking on the street. I remember there was a river over there and we were walking right next to the river. But it was all full of trees; they couldn't see us. There was a bridge about

one hundred feet from us. And there were two guys, two soldiers, talking to each other. I guess I told my friend of mine, "What are we going to do?"

"We're going to kill them." And the guy looked at us . . . said nothing, left us a bicycle and stuff like that. We didn't do anything. [laughter]

During that time, my brother was there, but we were not in the same group, see. Two brothers, they cannot be on the same group, they want to separate us. Once they came, the Germans and the Italians, they call in to clean the place out. And naturally, they're going to kill us when they find us. Naturally, we knew about it, so we start to walk away in the woods. And we went for probably thirty miles. So we run away from where we usually are. And somebody came to tell me that my brother went on a patrol with some other guys, and they didn't come back. They called me another name, they call me Renso because I use that name. And another friend of mine, he say, "Why don't you guys go and look for what will happen?"

So we start to walk. We walked for about a couple of days, and finally we got to the place. And naturally, we were very careful, with any step we made on the mountains and in the trees and stuff like that. Comes the night and this friend of mine, he had an uncle there in that town. And I knew a family there.

My friend said, "I'm going to sleep with my uncle," and for me to go to this place [where I knew a family]. It was about one hundred feet. And where he was going, it was about fifty feet. It was dark because you don't see no lights in the field. You don't see nothing at all, so you find a way. So I went to bed. And I never see that boy again in my life. I went to see his uncle in the morning when it was late. He never seen him. He never knocked on his door. His parents, after the war, they came to

my house and asked me what happened. That friend of mine disappeared forever.

Somebody found your brother, though.

They came back, yes.

You said there were 110 in your group?

Twenty each. There was also two, three Russians, prisoners of the Germans, in our group, see.

Who was your commander?

Well, they call the group, the *Legiona Istria*. Istria was his name. They're old names. You never know the real names of anybody.

Was he a military person, somebody with military training?

I don't know.

Because somebody had to teach you how to shoot a gun and . . .

. . . just to understand the radio. To understand the radio was going on when I went out there. I mean they had to know, I'm sure that somebody knew.

And somehow you had a radio. You must have communicated back about how many Germans you saw and all?

I don't know. I only heard the radio. But I didn't know, and I didn't ask, how they do stuff like that. They're just telling us what to do and things like that. Mostly, all our group, they were Italian Fascists with Mussolini. They were escaping from their place and they were joining us, see. They call it partisan, you know.

Naturally, they had some bad times over there. They are fighting, all the people. They die and things like that. But so many in our group, our big group . . . naturally we lost some people. They disappear, you know. The friend of mine was not the only one that disappeared. There were some other ones that disappear, see. But we never had really a fair fight. Naturally, they would attack us, yes, but somewhere along the line. Like, if you were sleeping at night at one of these homes, right away somebody comes out of a door, "It is the Germans, they are coming and we got to leave." So we just pack stuff, then we would be in the mountains. Because we just walk to the mountains, see. I don't know where.

Somebody must have had maps and known where to go?

Well, we knew the territory. We knew every territory exactly. When I went to war, I remember, because I walked quite a bit. It's not a big place, where we were. I don't know the scale, but we talk about kilometers. Two and one-half kilometers is about a mile and a half. For example, from Villa Nocha, Viasco, Brescia—there's three towns over there . . .

It's a couple of miles from one to the other.

You come to see the place very good, you got to know the people. The few months you are there, you know everybody from all these towns and things like that. And somehow—I don't know how the people put up with us, but they did. They were really helping us.

Did they think that you were helping the war effort? Did they believe it was important you were out there?

Yes. I think that, generally, the attitude was that they didn't want nothing to do with the Germans or Mussolini. They don't want nothing to do with those people. I know that. You can tell because they treat us very, very, well.

When they were bombing, when you were still living in Genoa, did you go to shelters?

We tried not to go. There's a lot of tunnels. You've got tunnels on the railroad and there's a lot of factories. Just to give you an idea, from Genoa to over here, there is some tunnel that probably is two miles long, see. The cross railway in downtown, it's about two miles long, goes from one station to another station. And some people, they just sleep there. They are not waiting for the alarm system of the city, because it becomes a big mess . . . people running all over, and they might get hurt. People probably step on each other in the confusion of the bombardment and things like that. So you go there. Some days they sleep over there. There's a tendency to go to one of these towns, because you also have the highway tunnels, road tunnels, generally there's a lot of tunnels, see.

When you and your brother lived in an apartment, what did you do?

About fifty feet away, there was another building. That bomb demolished half of that building. I think we were in a tunnel when that happened then. I don't know if it's the age or something, but we don't care.

What happened once (I don't know if I told you), but on a Sunday I was going on a street past a truck. It was full of bodies. There must have been about one hundred bodies. He was going toward the cemetery. And the people, they were walking around, and they

look. I don't know if to say we don't care or what. We want tears. But you are quiet. I don't know what it is. You see this truck full of bodies. Like, you see a body on the street that during the night somebody shoot him. Can you imagine, you walk outside over here, go to your college, see two bodies on the street, and you just walk by? Would you do that?

Probably not today . . .

Well, you see what I'm saying? That's why I'm going back fifty years. That's what I know. That's what I see. I don't remember nothing exciting, or worry about it, you know, every day.

The hardest thing was to find food?

The war was all a series of those things, you know. Actually, the food was the big thing because we didn't carry money. The food was like copper. You could get anything you wanted with that copper.

Sometimes we jump the train. While it was still slowing down to stop, we jump it. We don't want to deal with the police. At the exit of the railroad station, usually there's some policemen there, you see. We were jumping the train, so we don't have to go to the exit of the railroad station.

And nobody in your family had to go in the army?

OK, I was the only one. I was supposed to go into the navy, OK? I was going to the school of ships. You know much on ships, you go to the navy, you don't go to the army. When Italy quit the war in 1943, I was eighteen. There was no more navy after that, because all the navy went with the Allies—was finished. So there

was no more navy, so naturally they don't call you anymore. And the older brother of mine, he didn't pass the medical exam. And the [other brothers], honestly, they were too young.

Your father was a merchant marine and probably that was just as important to the war effort, anyway.

But he was no more a merchant marine during the war. In the war he just became a laborer. It was political; there was no more merchant marines. There were a few big ships that were transporting the troops from across the Mediterranean to go to Libya. But after that, in a year or so, a fellow by the name of Rommel . . . Well, you know he was the general. The Germans went to Libya, too. They were really invading Egypt. I think it was in 1942 or something like that.

On the radio, did you listen to the progress of the war?

Just the newspaper. We had no radio.

Did you pay attention to the war and what was going on, what the Germans were doing and what Mussolini's army was doing, or did you just worry about daily life?

We were following [the war]. Like, I remember December 7, Pearl Harbor. I remember it was the headline of the newspaper. I was no buy the newspaper, but I was stopping by because they are hanging the newspaper there. And I want to stop in there, reading what was there. You knew pretty much what was going on, see, on the war. When Italy declared war, June 10, 1940, I was in Naples. And Mussolini declared the

war and made a speech. I went on the square where the people stayed, and while the city declared war, the people, they walk away sad. That was the end, when we declared war.

Did you ever see Mussolini in person? Did you ever see him make a speech?

In 1938, yes.

What was it like to hear him speak?

I wore the uniform, too, you know. I was a little boy; you got different uniforms as you grow up to be a Fascist. Everybody was happy with him. But when the war started, in 1940, that was the end.

Your wife was born in Reno?

Yes.

What's her maiden name?

De Prati.

And her first name?

Gloria.

And she and her mother, after the war, were going to Italy to see her mother's family. What year was that?

1948.

And you were working on the . . .

That was the first trip I made to the United States after the war. And I got married over here in Reno. I took a one trip vacation. [laughter] During that time we were cruising

on the Caribbean Sea. So I took a trip over here, where we got married February 11, 1951. See, February 11, that's when we were cruising the Caribbean Seas.

That's why it is strange, you know, the experience of the war at my age. It was the year I was fifteen . . . what happened in my family and all that. It's been a big mess, hungry and no food and all my friends are on the same boat.

You hear about the gangs over here. You hear all the time in the newspaper. And I worked with a judge over here—I'm a probation officer—Janet Berry. I meet people from all over, people on probation or in prison. They got to meet with me once a week. They got to do certain things that the judge say. And I like to say that the families over here, they're all to pieces.

OK.

Comes a boy, (and I can't tell how old) he got to have problems with drugs, shoplifting, and all kinds of stuff. And most of it, they don't have a family, though they might have a stepfather with a girlfriend, or a stepmother with a boyfriend. And some, they live by themselves; some with gang members, you know. But the only people they got—I don't know why it has to be—is the gangs. But you see what I'm saying? They don't have nobody else. That's what I don't understand. They're talking about eliminating the gangs. We're humans.

When I came up to this country, I joined right away the Italian gang. It's the way people are, to have a relationship with others. I call it an Italian gang, but they were immigrants. They came over here, and they were very successful. And they told me what to do. The first thing I did, I draw nails. For

two years I was a contractor, with a business. But working for me, I had the best carpenter in town, because I didn't know a damn thing about it. I wanted to make money. [laughter]

One of the things that you had, then, was a group of people during war that you survived with?

Yes.

Then you went to a bigger gang, and when you went to the partisans, you went to a bigger gang. And then when you came here, you joined a social group of other Italian immigrants, and you worked together so that you all succeeded.

Yes, but this gang, they were already successful. It's so damn easy over here, it's incredible. I think you got to be an outsider to see it, because over here they can't see it! I got five sons over here you know, they all went to school. But they tell you it's easy, you don't have to go to school! [laughter] Oh, I tell you, I always liked to laugh about that.

That's why I go back almost every year. I go back to Italy at the end of August. And my wife, she likes to go back there. And naturally, I go to see all these old friends of mine. I see the old places, and so . . .

You still have friends from when you were a boy and from the partisans? Does your wife speak Italian?

Oh, yes.

She grew up here speaking Italian?

Yes. In fact, she used to study Italian like crazy. She has books, Italian books, I mean,

and an Italian dictionary. Sometimes I got to refer myself to the dictionary because I'm forgetting it all what it means.

Do you still have relatives in the small town where you were born?

Cousins—that's all.

Do you go back to visit them?

Oh, yes.

How was the war for them, in a small town? Was it easier to get food? Did they grow their own food?

It's easy, oh, yes. In a big city you got to stand in line with a thousand people to get a little piece of something to chew on. In the country, you always find some potatoes, some trees, any vegetable, anything that is growing. And they imagine they don't eat it, but when you're younger, you see anything growing [you eat it]. I know at my house I got some Irish shrubs; I don't know what they call it. But they are growing stuff like that. I was thinking I remember, that we were getting that stuff, we cut it there, we boil it, and we eat it. [laughter] Anything that you see way out on the country, you eat. In the city, there you don't find nothing.

For you, did the war change completely what you might have been? What would your life have been like if there had been no war? What kind of a life would you have had? Do you think you would have just gone to the sea and been a merchant marine?

Yes.

And so you would have been like your father.

ONOFRIO FREDERICK SALVIA

Ken Adams: I'd like you to start by saying who you are, when you were born, where you were born, and kind of describe your family.

Onofrio Fredrick Salvia: Yes, well, I'm Onofrio Frederick Salvia. I was born in Manhattan, New York City, on August 31, 1917, to immigrant parents from Sicily. My dad had come over in 1905, and my mother, with her family, approximately at the same time. My father was a mortician with a pretty good business in a small Italian section of the city—one of many that existed in Manhattan at the time. I went to the public schools in Manhattan. I graduated from Stuyvesant High School, which was then regarded as the best high school in the city. I learned recently that it still has that reputation.

I was not much of an athlete as a youngster. I did play baseball, but the school did not have a baseball team, so I played sandlot baseball. I tried football . . . was not very successful at it, although I was a “scrubstitute” on the team for three years. Stuyvesant High School, incidentally, had

an engineering course—unlike the other schools where you studied art or commerce and that sort of stuff. Stuyvesant High School gave a very, very comprehensive engineering oriented course. I graduated in February, 1935, and chose the Naval Academy for my higher education.

I had become interested in the Naval Academy for a number of reasons. The first was that the U.S. Fleet came into New York Harbor in 1934. I had a young uncle who had served in the merchant marines, and he dragged me over every ship in the harbor that summer.[laughter] At that time [there was] some movie or something called *Midshipman Jack*, and there was a West Point movie, all of which kind of steered me towards the military school.

This was Depression time. I had no idea of my father's financial situation. All I knew was that I and my brother were going to go to college. It so happened that my brother was a brilliant student. Three years younger than me, he had skipped a couple of times in grade and high school, and graduated from



ONOFRIO FREDERICK SALVIA, U. S. NAVY, 1944

college just a year after me. Somehow, as a seventeen year old, I came up with the idea that if I could get a free education, that would certainly help my father, and help my brother get his education.

And what happened, is that while I was applying to a couple of engineering schools, because I had dreamed of becoming a civil engineer, a couple of my friends were looking into the Naval Academy, and were studying the Naval Academy publication. I borrowed it, read it, and said, "That's for me."

Then the problem arose . . . how do I convince my family? My father's first reaction was "My God! A Sicilian who wants to be in the military?"

And I said, "Well, sure. Your brother served in the Italian Army, why not me?"

When he realized that I was serious, and saw the advantages financially, he said, "Well, OK, if that's what you want to do. I'll help you as much as I can, but let's go convince your mother."

Well, we worked on her and she finally said, "OK."

My father had said, "Look, I'll go along with this project of yours, provided you promise that you're going to be the best naval officer you can be. In fact, if you want to be a street cleaner in the streets of New York, I'll buy you the push cart and the broom, but you better be the best street cleaner around."

I said, "Well, I want to go."

Then how do you get to the Naval Academy? We went to the pastor of our church. My father had no political connections. But Father Leone said, "Well, look here buddy, Mr. Peter Curran, who was recently the sheriff of our county, is the guy you should go see." Mr. Curran happened to own a livery stable, and was the man that my father dealt with for funeral cars . . . well, it was actually funeral coaches in those days. I even remember the horse drawn funeral coaches.

Mr. Curran got me to our congressman, a man named Martin J. Kennedy, who was a

big insurance man in New York City. When I was interviewed by Congressman Kennedy, he said, "Well, look son, I have given my appointments for this year for the Naval Academy." At that time, each congressman and senator could have three appointees in each of the two service academies at any one time. He said, "I just happen to have three vacancies. I've appointed three principals, and two alternates to each of those appointments. That means that I've got nine boys that are scheduled to try to get into the Naval Academy. All I can offer you is a West Point appointment."

I said, "No, I really don't care for a West Point appointment. I'm willing to wait until next year. Maybe I can get into the Naval Academy then."

So he said, "Well, all right, I'll tell you what . . . you go to the navy yard. Here's a letter. Go see the doctor at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and get yourself a physical. We'll put that in the file."

I took the physical. I recall that the doctor was a lieutenant commander who really was not very kind to me. I was born with flat feet. And when playing baseball, I had been struck in the testicles and had a minor condition called varicocele, a couple of veins that were distended. The doctor said to me, "Well, son, you're not going to make it physically." And that's what he wrote to the congressman.

That saddened me, of course, but as a seventeen year old, I wasn't going to give up. I don't think I've been as smart as I was then, since. In early 1935—and I graduated in February of 1935 from Stuyvesant High School—President Roosevelt, in his wisdom foreseeing what was going to happen globally, gave West Point and Annapolis an additional appointment. I read that in the paper and was at the congressman's office that same morning, knocking on his door. And he

said, "Well, yes, OK, but I'm going to have to make you an alternate. I've already given that appointment to another boy. That makes you the alternate, which makes you eligible to take the examinations for entrance. However, you've got this report from the doctor at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and it says you're not going to make it."

I said, "Mr. Kennedy, let me take the mental exam. You have eleven of us to fill four appointments. Maybe I'll be lucky enough that the other guys will flunk the exam, and I'll end up eligible to go. And if I go to Annapolis, and the doctors in Annapolis turn me down, then I will shut up and go another route."

He said, "Well, that's a fair deal."

As it turned out, only three of the eleven young men that he had appointed passed the examinations. I was one of the three. I received a letter to appear at the Naval Academy. I was given a physical exam by a Naval Academy doctor, who said to me, "Gee, you've got flat feet."

I said, "Yes, sir." We discussed them. I explained to him that my father had had me in orthopedic shoes as a youngster, and that I was working with a man at a nearby gym, massaging my feet.

He said, "Look, we need young men like you." In my health record in red pencil it says "*Pedes planus*" right on the front page. I have a copy of that. "If you survive the first year, why then just go over to the hospital and fix up that little thing."

Well, to make a long story longer . . . of the three of us that entered the Naval Academy that year as Martin Kennedy's appointees, I'm the only one who survived the first year, and survived the four years. My four years at the Naval Academy weren't easy years; it was tough.

Did the flat feet bother you?

No.

Marching?

I've never had any trouble with my feet . . . absolutely never.

Flat feet is simply no arch?

No arch. Actually, I've read and heard some comments by doctors that people with flat feet have less trouble with their feet than people with arches. But no, it's never been a problem. The philosophy in the Navy in those days was that if you had flat feet and you stood a four-hour watch, it was going to be tough on your feet. I never really had any problems. You know, as a youngster, if your feet get tired, you lift one up and rest it for a while, and then you rest the other one. [laughter]

Plebe year was pretty tough at the Naval Academy. Going into the Naval Academy directly from high school, I was competing with fellows who had one and two years of college. This was Depression time. A lot of people were looking for a free education. But I enjoyed it. I guess I was a street smart kid from New York City. In those days, when hazing was done at the Naval Academy—it's pretty well abolished by now—it was a ritual. It pitted you, the plebe, the first year man, against the upper classmen. I enjoyed that. I had a lot of fun. I got beat a few times (they used to beat you with a broom and that sort of stuff).

I did play baseball at the Naval Academy, which, looking back on it, was a fairly significant accomplishment for a fellow who had not played organized baseball as we know it now . . . either in American League Baseball, Little League, or any kind of league play. We played sandlot. We'd pick up games.

But I was able to make the baseball team and earn my letter.

What position did you play?

I was an outfielder. Growing up in Manhattan in our day, baseball was a subject of considerable interest with us. My brother and I both were real baseball fans. We used to go to Yankee Stadium and to the Polo Grounds as often as we could when we were in high school. We could travel on our own. We lived in mid-Manhattan. Saturday mornings, Father gave us a dollar apiece. It took a nickel to get to Yankee Stadium or the Polo Grounds, a nickel back, fifty cents to sit in the bleachers, and that left you with forty cents to buy a hot dog and a drink. It was a lot of fun. We both are still avid baseball fans.

One of the pleasures of playing for the Naval Academy is that our coach was Max Bishop, who had been a second baseman on the Philadelphia Athletics . . . Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics that had won the world championship in 1933. He was a fine man to play with.

Football, I gave up. I actually went out for the plebe football team, but I was discouraged because almost everybody else trying out for the plebe football team had been either All-State, All-City, or some kind of a champ. I had been a substitute on a very poor football team in Stuyvesant High School, and that didn't seem to be the way for me to go. Of course, that was during my first fall at the Naval Academy. I entered the first of June of 1935, and we're talking now about September.

Were the first three months just physical training?

Yes. Classes started the end of September. That first summer we were kept busy drilling,

learning how to march, shooting rifles, and sailing sailboats. They had some small craft in which they taught us seamanship. We did an awful lot of rowing in the big boats. Academically, the school started the end of September because the upper classmen who had been on cruises during the summer, were given the month of September for leave. That was the routine all of my four years.

The second summer we went on a three month cruise on battleships to Europe: stopping in Portsmouth, England; Göteborg, Sweden; and Le Havre, France. The ship I was on, which was *The Oklahoma*, was diverted August of 1936 to Bilbao, Spain, when the Spanish Civil War started. We were down there for a couple of days. The Navy decided to leave *The Oklahoma* there. We midshipmen transferred to the *Arkansas* and came home. That was the second summer. When we returned from that cruise, we had the whole month of September for leave. Then we got two weeks leave at Christmas time, and that was the only two times during the year that we got leave and could go home.

You said that everybody else who had gotten an appointment at the same time you did, washed out sometime during the first year. Was that an academic washout?

Yes. They both flunked at the end of the first year. They survived the summer but failed academically for promotion is what happened.

At the end of each year, you're promoted on to the next year, very much like you're promoted in rank?

Yes. You simply move up into the next class.

So the second summer's cruise was . . . ?

At the end of plebe year, you get promoted and you become a third-classman, or a youngster, as we called them then. Then you take this three months cruise. While you're on the cruise ships, and these were old battleships (we had three of them that particular year) you were also accompanied by first-classmen, the men who just moved into their last year. They were on the cruise, too. The third-classmen were assigned the duties normally performed by enlisted men. We swabbed the decks; we loaded the guns; we wiped the oil in the engineering spaces; we did all of those jobs. We did the helmsman's job, and learned how to signal and that sort of stuff; which were the functions normally performed by the enlisted men. The first-classmen were assigned duties typical of junior division officers. They stood watches on the bridge, and stood watches in the engineering spaces. This is how we got a foundation for our future duties.

Was there a regular crew or were you the whole crew?

No, a regular crew was on board. It was skeletonized to the degree necessary so that we would have living spaces, etc. But we actually stood watches like they did. We didn't stand by and watch them; we actually stood the watches.

Did the enlisted men get the privilege of watching you do the work and laugh and think "Boy, I'm going to enjoy this because the next time I see this guy, he's going to be an officer?"

Actually, the enlisted men were real great guys. As a career naval officer, I have to tell you, I think they're fantastic people. They have been, always. The ones that I served

with, and the ones who are in there now, are great people.

The nice part of the cruise was that we got to visit. For instance, on our visit in Le Havre—the ship was there for eight days—we each got four days in Paris. We could sign up for excursions and that sort of stuff. As an eighteen year old in the beautiful city of Paris, pre-war Paris—that was a treat. Göteborg was another experience. Getting to know the Swedes and their lovely country and the great food they had was fine. In England, we spent eight days in Portsmouth and got to visit London. A couple of us went to Bath and that was an experience. We were all hot shot officers-to-be. Scotch was the stuff to drink. Were we shocked when we stayed at the hotel in Bath and paid more for a bottle of White Horse Scotch than it cost in the United States! But that was a good experience.

And youngster year, which would be the second year at the Naval Academy, I did better academically. Plebe year, it was a matter of getting used to how they did things. I did pretty well, academically. The only subject I had difficulty with . . . and these were typical college courses, you know, was English. We had English, English composition, American history, math, and I think we had algebra or trig, I don't remember exactly which, then physics and chemistry and electricity. I had some of that background from my high school. So the only subject I had trouble with was English. [laughter] My English at high school was not that good. I really struggled with it. Each of the four years my academic performance improved, so that when I graduated, I graduated something like 180 out of 500, which wasn't too bad for a little immigrant kid from New York City.

The second cruise at the end of second year was a mixed bag. We spent a month on a destroyer cruising up and down the east

coast. During that month we did both the enlisted and the officer roles, because we were a little smarter and a little better prepared. Then we had a period of several weeks of indoctrination into flying. That consisted of going up in PBY's and PBM's, old sea planes. We flew right outside of the Naval Academy right off the Severn River. And we'd fly over Chesapeake Bay. They'd take us up for several hours, let us handle the controls and get generally acquainted with aviation. I really didn't develop a passion for it at that time. I did a little later on, but it wasn't a very deep passion, so I didn't go into aviation.

Our third year is when we got into the military and naval subjects seriously. We studied ordinance, navigation, ship construction . . . that sort of stuff. The first two years, then, were basically academic and sort of what you would get in college. Oh, we did have language and I was very smart there. I took Italian as my language. But I was never number one in my class. My classmate Ray Penso, who had been born in Italy, was always number one.

You spoke Italian as a child?

Yes. My father insisted that we learn Italian. It served me well in my career and it still does even today. My father was very wise, insisting that my brother and I both learn Italian as youngsters. We grew up with the Sicilian dialect. I must add, here, just having spent two weeks in Sicily early in this year, that Sicilian is both a dialect and a language. It derives from Italian, basically, but has its own dictionary and literature, written in Sicilian, so it really is classified as a language. Well, anyway, he insisted that we study Italian as opposed to Sicilian. Sicilian was our first language. Naturally, as kids in the kitchen, when your mother talked to you she used Sicilian. Once

we started grade school, after we finished doing our homework, in the afternoon or evening, my father sat down and said, "Here we go." So my brother and I both learned Italian. My brother studied it in college, too.

I was able to use my Italian in the Navy. I was assigned to the naval staff in Naples, Italy, in 1953 and '54 and it was a tremendous asset, serving me well during those two years. I studied Spanish at the Naval Intelligence School in 1946-47 immediately after the war. That was easier because I had studied French in high school and Italian at the Naval Academy. My last tour in the Navy, I was Senior Naval Advisor to the Argentine Navy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where they have Italians and Spaniards. So both languages were very, very useful. Through the years, they've been very, very helpful.

Anyway, back to the Naval Academy. Third class year we started to get into astronomy, maps, celestial navigation, and all that stuff. The end of third class year we went off on our three month cruise again, this time with three battleships, and this time we went to Cherbourg, Copenhagen, and then back to England. I had the chance to visit Paris again, and see what had happened there. Copenhagen was fascinating because the Danes were very, very open people even in those days. As a young midshipman in uniform, it was tough keeping the girls away.

And I doubt you tried very hard.

Didn't try at all. England was another wonderful experience. A man named McGraw—no relation to the New York Giants manager in those days—was an Englishman who wanted to get baseball started in England. He had arranged through the Embassy for the midshipman squadron to put together a team of baseball players, and he arranged

a schedule. We were in England eight days, and we played baseball eight nights against an assortment of teams. In fact, two of the games we played against Mormons who were over there on their missions. That was a lot of fun. We put together a team made up of three or four of us from the Naval Academy baseball team, and the others were enlisted men from the ships. We were treated royally everywhere we went.

The thing I remember most was that McGraw was an outgoing guy and he got along real well with us. This was when Wally Simpson and the Prince of Wales were playing games, and it looked like he was going to abdicate. John McGraw thought that that was great. And all of a sudden from the rear of the bus, one of our enlisted men says, "Hey, John! What you have forgotten is that the Navy got to that lady first." Wally Simpson had been married to a naval officer before. [laughter]

Each year you had leave in September? What did you do on your leave?

It was easy to get to New York. I just went to New York and hung around.

The Navy is making you more sophisticated. So going back, it's not like you are a nineteen year old out of a job.

You're right. You grow up very fast at the Naval Academy. You're in an ambiance that's entirely different from anything you were in before; in my case, growing up in New York in an ethnically mixed neighborhood. My brother and I were the first two guys in our block to go to college. When we used to come home, I was speaking English and they were speaking "dee's," "dem," and "dose." I don't want to put those fellows down because some of them did go on and have successful lives.

It's not only your language that's more sophisticated, it's everything about your life.

I never overdid the differences that I was developing. I kept in touch with the fellows I had gone to high school with, principally—you do.

The war was coming on and it was serious business. I was very, very interested in being a successful naval officer, you know. I liked what I did at the Naval Academy. I liked going to sea. That was a great deal of fun. But I think the thing that was most appealing to me was the interplay with people. I happened to have decided recently that I'm a people's man. I talk to anybody, anywhere, about anything. People interest me. I think, unconsciously, that's the part I liked about the Navy. The reason I've come to this conclusion recently is my relationship with all these people who served with me. Imagine having a man who is now in seventies call your home, talk to your wife and say, "Look, Captain Salvia was the greatest. You know, he saved us. He pulled us through the war."

And my wife looks at me and she says, "These guys are kidding."

I said, "You know, that's the way they feel, Lois."

They were kids just like I was a kid, and that's what they remember. I call these guys; talk to them; write to them; they write to me. It's a nice exchange. I'm going to give you a little ditty that summarizes what I'm saying. This little ditty I learned in the Navy, "The officers, they ride in a motorboat. The captain, he rides in his gig. It doesn't go a damn bit faster, it only makes the old bastard feel big."

Do you know what a gig is? On board ship when you're anchored out, you have to use boats to go to shore. The enlisted men use the regular life saving boats. Most big ships have a real gussied up boat that's called the gig.

So that's why the ditty goes, "It doesn't go a damn bit faster, it only makes the old bastard feel big." This makes me feel big, you know, at this stage in my life.

As you enter your fourth year, you really know there's a war coming.

That's right. We graduated June 1, 1939. I drew assignment to a cruiser in the Pacific Fleet. I had a buddy, Danny Wallace, from Hoboken, New Jersey, across the river. During the four years, he was a pitcher on the baseball team. We grew very close and we decided we wanted to go to the same ship. Danny and I, and six other classmates, drew the *U.S.S. Savannah, CL42*. We had to report to the *Savannah* about the first of July, 1939, in Long Beach, California.

Danny and I had dated two sisters from Philadelphia that we had met after one of the Army/Navy games in Philadelphia. We had worked out a deal with an enlisted man on the *Savannah*. The *Savannah* and four ships in that division had just been built on the east coast. The *Savannah* was the first to be transferred to the west coast for permanent assignment. Some of the people on the ship who had automobiles were looking for people to drive their cars to the west coast. We drove a 1936 Ford V-8 belonging to a cook on the *Savannah*. We had that car for a whole month. I had already obtained my driver's license. We tooled around New York and New Jersey in that Ford V-8 for a month.

The day that we took off for the west coast, we were going down to Philadelphia to spend an evening with our sister girlfriends at their home. I was driving down Highway One from New York City and somewhere near Princeton a policeman pulled me over. I was doing something over sixty miles an hour on an empty highway. This fellow on

the motorcycle pulled me over. I showed him my driver's license, and he said, "Follow me."

Off we went into a little town, Lawrenceville, to go before a Justice of the Peace. We were wearing our white works undress uniform, which was the sailor's suit except we didn't have a neckerchief and we didn't have the stripes on the neck band. We had our names stencilled across the front of our blouse, which is the way they identify us. That's what we wore at the Naval Academy for drills. When the judge looked at my driver's license and asked me who we were I said, "Ensign Salvia and Ensign Wallace."

He said, "Oh, I served in the Navy in World War I. I was in submarines." And so we had to listen to his sea stories. He ended it with, "You owe five bucks, boys. Get on your way."

The highway patrolman, a New Jersey state trooper, was standing behind us listening to all of this. When we walked out to get into the car, he said to us, "Geez, I didn't know you guys were officers. If I had known you were officers, I wouldn't have pulled you in."

We both looked at him and one of us said, "You mean just because you thought we were enlisted men, you're going to pull us in?" We resented that, you know, and I've never forgotten it. That was a terrible experience. I'd developed a fondness and loyalty to enlisted men.

We did get to the west coast. We had our troubles with that automobile. We put fifty-four quarts of oil in it on the way to Long Beach, California. We had gotten into the habit of every time we pulled into a gas station, we'd check the oil and pour more oil in it. This one night, somewhere in New Mexico, the guy said, "You don't have any oil in your crank case." [laughter] "All I get is the whiff." When I turned the car over to that

cook on the *Savannah* and told him that, he was just shocked, but then he admitted that he hadn't really put much maintenance into that car.

Duty on the *Savannah* in California was one of learning. We were given assignments as assistant division officers and in the year I was aboard, I did three months as an assistant gunnery officer, three months as assistant communication officer, and six months as assistant navigator.

Interestingly, our skipper had just come from the Naval Academy, where he had been head of the Athletic Department. He was gung-ho for our ship to win the fleet cruiser baseball championship. Danny Wallace, the pitcher, and I spent more time ashore practicing with the baseball team than we did on board ship.

But the experience on the ship was memorable. This skipper was also a very tough cookie. The ship spent a lot of time in port during that fall conducting gunnery school for all the ships of that class. A great deal of our time was spent at anchor in Long Beach Harbor. Occasionally, we'd go out for a morning or an afternoon to do some firing practice; though the *Savannah* did get out to Pearl Harbor for a stint. What made those first three months memorable for us eight new ensigns was that we were not permitted to go ashore on liberty but once every three weeks. That was kind of tough to take. We were right there in Long Beach harbor within view of the city, and a few miles from Los Angeles, but we could only get ashore every third weekend. That lasted for three months, but it had its positive side. At the end of three months, we were qualified to be officers of the deck when the ship was in port.

Officer of the deck being the duty officer, the person responsible for the ship?

That's right. We were way ahead of our contemporaries in the other ships.

These were the days when the dark clouds were beginning to loom on the horizon. The war had started in Europe in September of 1939, and we were beginning to exercise seriously, and worry about the war. Tragically, senior naval officers at that time were arrogant. I recall hearing senior officers: "Oh, don't worry about the Japanese. It will take us two weeks to find them, and then we'll polish them off in nothing flat!" Well, that was a crock of you-know-what, right from the beginning.

We did start to exercise. We would do maneuvers in darkened ships. That's a frightening operation, when you are in a big task force and are maneuvering the ships, and there is no radar. We did not get radar on our ships until about 1941.

After my year in *The Savannah*, I was transferred to an old World War I destroyer in San Diego. That was an easy transfer. I went from the *USS Savannah CL42* to the *USS Hovey*, which was originally *DD208*. While I was on board, we went into the shipyard and were modified to operate as a high speed minesweeper.

What kind of equipment did they put on to make it a mine sweeper?

They put the paravanes on board. What you do, is you stream on a specialized cable that's a couple of hundred yards long, one on either side. The paravane keeps the cable away from the ship. It's a dangerous operation for the people on the ship to have to do. But anyway, that's how it was converted.

On that ship, the prewar augmentation had not really started, yet, when I went aboard. I was the fifth officer on the ship, and I was welcomed with open arms by the captain

and the other two watch officers because I was able to be the third watch officer. We spent a lot of time at sea, so I was a big help.

Both the captain and the executive officer of the *Hovey* had been instructors at the Naval Academy when I was a midshipman, and I had been in their classes. Captain John E. Florence had been in the ordinance department, and the executive officer, Lieutenant Roy S. Benson, had been in the navigation department. As I said, they greeted me with open arms, "Boy, you've had a year on board a cruiser. You ought to be able to help us out a great deal."

A smart-alecky kid, I said to the captain, "Captain Florence"

"Yeah?"

"One thing I didn't bring with me from the *USS Savannah* was my baseball contract."

He said "What do you mean?"

I said "Well, I spent most of my time playing baseball." [laughter] "So you're going to have to teach me a lot more than I already know." It worked out real fine. They were great guys, and we had some interesting cruises to the Hawaiian Islands. Operating at night, darkened, on the destroyer was pretty damn exciting.

I was aboard that ship for nine months and then was transferred to the U.S. Naval Mine Warfare School in Yorktown, Virginia, in April, 1941, for a three month course in mine warfare. At that time, when World War II started in Europe, the U.S. Navy was still, as far as mine warfare was concerned, in World War I. The British had learned pretty quickly that the Germans were experts in mine warfare. They had developed new minesweeping tactics, which is what we learned at this school. In fact, during the three month course when I was there, a couple of times we had U.S. Navy officers there who had been serving with the British

specifically to learn new mine warfare tactics and defenses.

From there, I went to the *USS Howard*, DMS-7, a sister ship of the *Hovey*, which had similarly been converted to high speed minesweeping functions when it was recommissioned in 1940. The *Howard* was originally the DD179. It had been built in San Francisco during World War I, operated for two years, put in moth balls, then drawn out of moth balls in 1940. I reported aboard as the minesweeping expert. I was very fortunate in that three men from the *Howard* had been classmates of mine at the Mine Warfare School for those three months. Our association at the Mine Warfare School was a definite asset when we got back on the ship together. They became very important in my life and I'm going to name them: Chief Boatswain's Mate Woods, Gunner's Mate DeVries, and Electrician's Mate Morris. They remained on the *Howard* for almost as long as I did. When I became C.O., Commanding Officer, of the ship, I leaned on those three men very, very heavily. They were very fine petty officers. I actually had the privilege of promoting them to chief petty officers before they left the ship.

What month did you . . . ?

I reported aboard the *Howard* the third of July, 1941.

You ended up serving a total of four years as a mine technician?

Yes. I was an ensign when I went aboard the *Howard* in July of '41; the war started in December. I was then promoted to lieutenant, junior grade. In June of 1942, I was promoted to lieutenant. By January of 1943 I had been through every job on that ship except captain, executive officer and engineering officer, and

we had a lot jobs. [laughter] I was ship's service officer, the guy who worried about whether we had enough coca-cola on board [laughter]. I was the laundry officer, the assistant gunnery officer, the gunnery officer, the first lieutenant, and on January of 1943, I became executive officer and navigator. In August of 1943, I became commanding officer as a twenty five-year old, four year Naval Academy graduate. I was among the very first in my class to get command of a warship in World War II. I remained aboard as commanding officer until 1 May of 1945.

On the *Howard*, we spent the summer and fall of 1941 exercising from our home port in Norfolk, Virginia. We did individual and division exercises, both as destroyers and division exercises, both as destroyers in the antisubmarine mode operating with submarines, or in the minesweeping mode. We'd go out and stream our sweep gear and stuff like that. The war started in 1941, the seventh of December, and immediately we were put on patrol station and started escorting convoys.

Do you know exactly where you were when you first heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

Oh, I know exactly. We were tied up at Pier One, Norfolk Naval Base, Virginia, that Sunday morning. I was on board. Yes, I know exactly.

What did you think at that time?

Well, we were horrified.

Did you have classmates at Pearl Harbor?

Yes. The message came over "This is not a drill! This is not a drill!" I was aboard with a couple of other bachelors. By this time, we had been augmented and had more officers

on board. I was the senior ensign on board and received the message. I called the skipper and executive officer, and they rushed down to the ship. We spent the rest of the morning [listening to] radio messages—which is all we had in those days—expecting to get clarifying messages in code, but we didn't. Everything we got was in plain language. [laughter] And by the time three or four hours had passed, we were so pissed off at the skipper for keeping us there. Decoding was not done by machine in those days; it was done manually. Every once in a while, we'd get another message and it was in clear language. It was a rough day. We didn't know what to think. We were horrified, particularly later on when we got the details of the attack, and the statistics. I had friends who were there, classmates, and ex-shipmates. What to do? We just did our jobs.

We went to sea. We got orders to patrol, sometimes, and sometimes we would escort convoys. Generally these would be tankers. We would take tankers from the Gulf of Mexico—from Galveston, Houston, etc.—and run them up to New York, or to Boston. We got as far as Panama, as far as Trinidad, and as far as Iceland. But because we were, so called, "short legged," we did not have enough fuel to permit us to cross the ocean. One of the modifications they made, when they converted these ships to high speed minesweepers, was to take out one of the boilers and put extra fuel tanks in to augment our fuel capacity and our cruising range. The increased capacity still did not permit us to make a transatlantic voyage without fueling.

When you say high speed, had they done something to make it faster?

In their original version, these ships, which were eleven hundred tons, with twenty-five

thousand horse power steam turbans, could get up to speeds of thirty-seven knots in calm seas, which is the equivalent of about forty miles an hour. The high speed comes from the difference in minesweeping capabilities. Our old minesweepers from WWI, which were still being used in WWII, did their minesweeping at speeds of eight to ten knots. High speed minesweepers could sweep at speeds approaching twenty knots, twice as fast. That's why we were used for assault operations. We went in and swept the target area.

Sometimes, like at Iwo Jima, our ships, because of the deep sea bottom, were within a half a mile of the beach. We were easy targets for gun batteries on the shore. Fortunately, the Japanese never shot at us. They had learned early in the war that after the high speed minesweepers did their minesweeping, the big ships were going to come in close to bombard the shore, and they made juicier targets. Fortunately for us, in the five operations that we participated in in the Pacific, we found mines only at one location. That was in Leyte Gulf. That was very interesting for us, and very hazardous, and very dangerous, because we did the minesweep in a typhoon. Fortunately, there were not that many mines left. My little task group of two ships swept one part of the entrance in Leyte Gulf, and we cut maybe twenty mines. The hazard arose in trying to locate the cut mines, and destroy them. We had to do that with rifle fire.

The mine, essentially, was anchored to the bottom, and you'd come by, cut the mine loose, the mine would float free, and you'd explode the mine with rifle fire?

Yes. It was good for the sailors. [laughter] They'd get up on the forecastle and try to blow the mines up before we got too close to them. These were the traditional WWI mines

with a case probably [thirty-six inches or so] in circumference with chemical horns that activated the explosive. They had an anchor, and the depth was set hydrostatically. Our cables were specially designed serrated cables, so that as the cable came along, it would cut the mine's cable if you caught it far enough in the forward part of the ship's cable. If the cable didn't cut it, then at the end of the cable at the paravane there was a cutter, which was a set of claws, and the mine's cable would get caught in the claws, and would automatically be severed.

The paravane keeps the cable out away from the ship?

Yes. Mines would snag on the cable and they'd be cut by the serrated cable. If the cable didn't cut them, they would be cut by the cutter. We had a cutter that was an explosive cutter. If the mine's cable got caught in the cutter, it had a cartridge that would activate the blades to cut the mine.

We would sweep off the enemy shore at anywhere from fifteen to twenty knots, which was pretty fast compared to the old type of minesweeping. I would say that we were lucky; we didn't find that many areas where mines had been planted. Nevertheless, it was a risky operation because we always did this three days before the landings. The Marines landed on Iwo Jima the nineteenth of February. We had swept three days before. If there were itchy Japanese gunners on the shore, we would be the first targets for them. Fortunately, they were smart enough to ignore us.

After Pearl Harbor, you're in the Atlantic escorting . . .

. . . escorting convoys, generally, except for one major operation. We accompanied the task force of over a hundred ships that went to

North-West Africa to conduct the landings that permitted George Patton and his people to go ashore. We participated in those landings in North-West Africa in November of 1942. My ship and another ship swept down off the port of Safi, south of Casablanca. Others swept off Casablanca. We didn't find any mines there. That was French held territory and they hadn't planted mines; and the Germans hadn't.

What was the moral at that point? There hadn't been any good news from the American or Allied standpoint. Everything had been a loss up to that time. What was the feeling going in?

Well, this was complicated by the fact that the French were in control in Casablanca. These were the Vichy French, the ones who had sided with the Germans. Fortunately, they gave up very quickly. We scared the hell out of them.

After we got through our minesweeping work down in Safi, we got back up with the rest of the task force off Casablanca. I guess we spent three or four weeks up there. We were assigned as an antisubmarine escort for the *USS Augusta* which, along with the *USS Massachusetts* and a couple of other big ships, was busy throwing big shells on the port of Casablanca where the new French battleship, *Jean Bart*, was anchored. The *Bart's* armament had been completed but her engineering plant wasn't. She couldn't steam and come out and chase the Americans, but she was able to fire her big guns at our big ships.

Ordinance being the weapons?

The weapons, the guns. One day we had a couple of big shells land between us and the *Augusta*, which kind of frightened us young kids a little bit. Otherwise, it wasn't too bad for us because we had antisubmarine patrol

stations most of the time. Our station was assigned in the southern sector, so we were not in the area where the German submarines snuck in and sank four of our transports one night.

We left Casablanca in December in the teeth of a North Atlantic gale. We spent some very, very nervous hours; in fact, most of a couple of days. There were five of us destroyer minesweepers of the same division, accompanied by a tanker. We had to have a tanker to fuel us en route. On the way over we refueled a number of times from tankers accompanying us. On this occasion it was just us five ships and the tanker. My ship suffered some structural damage, which occurred at the height of this storm. Getting shot at can be harrowing, but looking up at a wave that is forty feet above you is pretty damn scary, too. That is when our ship was damaged. It was not serious damage, but it crippled us. Salt water got into our engineering system and salted up our evaporators. Our steam boilers had to have pure water to operate, so we immediately went on water rations to conserve the fresh water we had in the tanks [to use in our boilers] to enable us to proceed. We were on water rations for nine days. This happened on the sixteenth of December. We limped into Hamilton Harbor, Bermuda, on Christmas morning, 1942, with less than fifty gallons of fresh water for drinking purposes. By this time, our boilers were operating on salty water. That Christmas day was a happy day for us. We were able to stay in Hamilton for a couple of days to replenish the fresh water, and get the boilers cleaned out. We reached Norfolk and a shipyard where they could do the repairs in a couple of days. That was a very, very harrowing experience. I happened to be the first lieutenant on the ship and responsible for trying to stem the entrance of sea water where we had been

damaged. We finally did that. I won't mention my skipper's name, but when I went up to the bridge to make a report to him, he was there fingering his rosary beads. [laughter] It was so bad it was touch and go.

Is everybody afraid or is there too much work to do? What's the atmosphere in that kind of danger?

Well, I've been thinking about that. I say to myself, "What the hell were you thinking about when this happened?" And it's just too far back for me to really say. But I don't remember ever saying to myself, "What the hell are you doing here?" You did your job. On these two ships, which were basically destroyers, and even on the bigger destroyer that I had during the Korean War, the sea is menacing. I enjoy going to sea, but when you got into a severe storm like a typhoon in the West Pacific or a hurricane down in the Gulf of Mexico, you say to yourself, "There's not a goddamn thing I can do about it." You are helpless, completely helpless. "I can't get off this bus." You go along and do the best you can.

As an executive officer or skipper of the ship, you're worried about what is happening to the crew. Footing was very tough; people had to come and go, and in those old ships you had to go on the main deck, which was outside. Modern ships are different. Hell, you don't even have to go outside, everything is done within interior passageways. But then, you had to worry about people slipping, or getting thrown over the side.

They just had guy wires to hang onto to move from one place to another?

You had regular life lines. Not like on a merchant ship, where you just had wire cables

that were the rails. Whenever the seas got real rough, we had an inner set that we could install so that the men didn't have to go outboard. They came inboard and hung on to these stanchions and life lines. I don't wake up in the middle of the night like these poor guys who went to Vietnam do, but sometimes I think about it and I say, "What the hell was it like Fred?" You're sitting on the bridge and you're saying, "I'm here. I can't go any place. I'm at the mercy of Mother Nature." So, that's about it.

We were never in a situation where I was worried about shells. We worried about torpedoes. Off the east coast the war started in December. Now, remember, we're operating off a naval base in Virginia. German Uboats first appeared off the Virginia capes on the twelfth of January of 1942, and in two weeks sank thirteen ships. The month of January, German U-boats sank fifty-eight ships along the east coast. They were a menace.

We were steaming up and down among them, but my ship was very lucky—we never encountered a submarine. We thought we did a number of times and dropped depth charges, but they proved to not be submarines. No German submarine ever attacked us or the ships that we were escorting. When we left the Atlantic in December of 1943 to go to the Pacific, the score was zip-zip. We didn't get a submarine, nor did we get a mine, nor did they get us, or get any of the ships that we convoyed. [laughter]

In the wintertime off the east coast there was a lot of phosphorescence in the water. You'd be steaming along, and, if you were on the bridge, all of the sudden you'd see a white streak come straight at you. It didn't take us long to realize that that was a porpoise and not a torpedo. But the first time that we saw that, we all got frightened and yelled: "Torpedo!" It wasn't a torpedo. When ships are [near], it's the habit of porpoises to approach the

ship. During the daytime, if they stuck their fin out, you could see them. At night in this phosphorescence they left a trail. Escorting the convoys was pretty dull stuff.

Routine duty?

Routine, yes. But, your sonar people and the radar people are always on the alert. By this time we had radar, which helped us considerably in navigating and keeping contact at night, or in fog. We used to have to battle fog along the east coast at certain times of the year. But that was pretty routine.

I got command of the ship in August of 1943, and made a number of convoy trips, including two to Iceland. Then we went around to the Pacific through the Panama Canal in December. On the first of January, we were rehearsing with the huge task force preparing to make the Marshall Islands invasion. I'm talking about a task force that's got twenty transports; it's got cruisers and destroyers; probably seventy-five ships. My ship's position was in the center of the task force and was assigned to be the messenger boy for the admiral in charge. My ship was stationed fifteen-hundred yards directly ahead of the flag ship, with all these other ship around us. Some ship comes out of Long Beach that afternoon and plows straight through the task force and hits us broadside.

You say: "How come we didn't see him?"

Nobody told us about him. Our radar was not looking for strangers, we were busy using our radar to keep station so that we wouldn't be run down by the flag ship. The fact of the matter is that the ship was damaged, nobody was hurt, we were able to get back to port that day, and we spent a month or so in the ship yard repairing the damage caused by this other ship. We missed out on the Marshall Islands operation.

Once we were repaired we got back out and started operating out of Pearl Harbor. We went to Saipan, Tinian, Lingayen Gulf, and Iwo Jima. We did minesweeping and antisubmarine patrol runs. [After] the minesweeping, we would be assigned an antisubmarine patrol station as the big ships, with the big guns, came in to bombard the beach for the next two days. On the day of the landings, the transports would come in close to launch the landing craft, and we'd be assigned antisubmarine patrol around them as they unloaded the landing craft and the poor guys went ashore to get shot at. There was always a lot of activity. The first day the troops went ashore; then the tanks had to go to ashore; then the trucks had to go ashore; and the guns and that sort of stuff. So, for a number of days there was a lot of this milling around close to the beach. We, the anti-submarine ships, would be on the perimeter, hoping that if any submarines attempted to get in there, we'd intercept them. Submarines were not that big a problem with the Japanese. They didn't have that many and what they did have weren't that aggressive with. We didn't have any submarine scare at Saipan, Tinian, or Iwo Jima.

Leyte was the largest naval battle?

No, Okinawa was the biggest and the worst. You may be associating Leyte Gulf with the battle in the Suriagao Straits with the Japanese fleet. The landings at Leyte Gulf were fairly routine in terms of number ships, etc., but had a couple of battles.

Two things I remember as memorable items. We were assigned a patrol station outside of the entrance to Leyte Gulf on the day that General MacArthur was coming in to do his famous "I have returned" scene on the Leyte beaches. He was coming into the area on

board the light cruiser *USS Nashville*. When we spotted the *Nashville* and exchanged calls with her, we were told that the commander in chief was on board. We realized that they were going to pass very close aboard. What we did was to slow down and man the rail, which means that all of our men manned the rail and rendered to him the appropriate honors as the ship went by. I had my binoculars on the bridge, but I didn't see him. [laughter] He may have been in the cabin.

The other memorable thing that happened at Leyte Gulf is that this was the first time we experienced kamikazes. We were at anchor not very far from the Australian cruiser *HMS Shropshire*. There were two of those cruisers out there and I think it was the *Shropshire* that was hit by a kamikaze. That was the very first kamikaze, to my knowledge, and I think that the record probably shows that.

I mentioned my gunner's mate, DeVries, who had been at mine warfare school with me. He was very, very sharp. He came to me and said "Captain, if we have to worry about that kind stuff, I want permission to go ashore and see if I can't bum some fifty caliber machine guns from the Army."

I said, "Jeez, go ahead and do it." He came back with a dozen or so of the fifty caliber machine guns and ammunition to go with them. His idea, which we implemented, was to mount the fifty caliber machine guns on the stanchions on deck. When we went to general quarters (general quarters means that we manned battle stations and sealed up the ship to make it watertight) the repair party had to be up on deck, which meant they were just milling around. We installed these machine guns on the stanchions where the repair party would take station during general quarters, so that if we were attacked by an aircraft, these guys would have machine guns to shoot . . . a wonderful idea. From Leyte Gulf, our next

operation was in the Lingayen Gulf on the west side of Luzon. Proceeding through the inland seas of the Philippine archipelago, we were a part of a sizable task group of minesweepers, small craft and landing craft. We were under air attack for three whole goddamn days! Fortunately, the Japs weren't that good; our casualties were slight. They didn't kamikaze these little ships because they didn't want to waste an airplane. [laughter] But they did do a lot of shooting and dropping of bombs.

When you say casualties . . .

A couple of ships were damaged, but nothing serious. But it was three days, daylight at general quarters, which meant, for instance, feeding procedures changed. Everybody ate K-rations. We had K-rations in those days. The galley would make soup and coffee, but they wouldn't prepare meals at breakfast, lunch, or dinner while we were at general quarters. We just passed out K-rations. We got along on K-rations and soup and coffee.

Lingayen Gulf is a fjord-type situation. It's a deep water way, and the landing areas were deep down in the gulf. We were in the process of minesweeping, and had been all morning long, when all of a sudden, a swarm of these kamikazes came out over the horizon. I wished I had been wearing my leggings, because I thought one of them was going to get us. They didn't. They went right over our heads. There were twelve of them. They peeled off and each one off them hit one of the big ships that was preparing to come into the gulf. The bombard was short with heavy casualties.

Later that day, kamikazes hit three of our minesweepers. We shot down the only one who looked like he was aiming for us. On that particular day in January, five of our high speed destroyer minesweepers fell victim.

How many were there?

Well, we had thirteen destroyer minesweepers in that operation, and that day five of them got hit. Three of them by kamikazes, one of them by a bomb, and one by torpedoes.

I'll never forget this scene. I was right there—right there. A classmate and friend of mine, George McGurk from New York City, was the skipper of a ship in the next lane. All of a sudden the ship goes up like this: "Phhshew!" and then the wash swirls around. The bomb landed on the fan tail; the casualties were minimal since there are not many people in that part of the ship at general quarters. But it was a horrible sight.

And the fifty caliber machine guns came in handy because you did shoot down one of the . . . ?

It was the fifty caliber machine guns that shot down the Japanese airplane. Our main battery on those ships were three inch, fifty caliber, dual purpose anti-aircraft. We were using the VT proximity fuses, which had been developed during the war. These were the kind of fuses that transmitted a radio signal. When they came close to the target, they would explode. The kamikazes, who had figured this all out, came in low on the water. When we were firing at them coming in over the water, our shells would be actuated by the water and not by the airplanes. This occurred during that first wave where the twelve of them came in. We had a blanket of black clouds in front of those guys, but under all of them, and they came at us over those black clouds. The went over us, and landed on the other ships. The one we shot down was kind of wandering around looking for a target. God, he had all kinds of targets around him, but he

came for us. He was probably five hundred to a thousand feet in altitude when our fifty caliber bullets hit him. That was a big bang for the chief. [laughter]

We stayed anchored in Leyte Gulf for a number of days and then joined the task force for Iwo Jima. We [commenced] our minesweeping at Iwo Jima on February 16th, 1945, I guess, because they landed on the nineteenth. We were assigned anti-submarine patrol station during the day. It was the custom, before the troops went ashore, for the big ships, which were bombarding the beach during the day, to retire at night and get away from the scene. We would escort them away from the island, the target, at night, and then come back for them in the morning in time for them to start shooting again at sunrise. That's what we did the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth. On the morning of the landings, my ship was assigned as a lane marker for the landing boats going to the beach. These marines, heading for one of the toughest battles of the war, were steaming right alongside my ship. I could wave to them and cheer them on. That's what we did all of that day.

Five days later, I'm in a patrol station in the same general area, and I'm lollygagging around watching what's going on on the beach. It was actually possible to see the men, because we were less than two miles off the shore. You could see the men on this rocky hunk of the world.

You had binoculars and you just watched them?

Oh, yes, just watched the action. All of a sudden, here are a bunch of guys going up Mount Suribachi. I saw the men milling around in that area and I . . . I guess I didn't stay on them. But the next time I looked, there

was a flag flying, and boy, a big cheer went up from the ship. That was great stuff. I recorded this in one of my logs on Iwo Jima.

There were lots of records. The quarter master keeps a log of the events as they occur during the watch. Then the officer of the deck transcribes at the end of the watch. He sits down and he takes the quarter master's log and makes the entries in the ship's log, detailing whatever happened of significance during the day: if we inspected magazines; or if so and so fell and was hurt and took so many stitches in his head; all of the changes, of course, in the weather; if the captain holds mast; time and people who appeared before the captain for mast and whatever punishment was assigned. All that's recorded.

When you say the captain's mast, it's kind of like a minor court?

It's a non-judicial punishment. The word goes back to the old sailing days when the captain held punishment before the mast. The captain does this, and it's a hell of a privilege. I took a couple of things very seriously as a commanding officer. One was the mast challenge and the other was the writing of fitness reports. You had to write a fitness report on each officer every six months or at time of detachment.

That's an evaluation of performance of duty, and it's a major thing in their career development?

Absolutely. It's just something I took very, very seriously. I used to pour over it and try to come up with the right adjectives to describe people, and try to be fair.

How many officers did you have?

Well, on the old four piper, we had, max, seventeen, which is about as many as we could accommodate, and about 135 men. On the *Davison DMS-37*, we ran to twenty-one, twenty-two officers and about 275 men.

How long would they be under your command, on the average? A year?

A year, year and a half.

But you still took their careers seriously. What you had to say about them . . .

. . . is very critical. Some of those fellows, you know, were reserve officers, not career officers like I was. In fact, after I became executive officer, only myself and the skipper were Naval Academy graduates . . . career people. The others were all ninety day wonders, the guys who came in and filled in the slots and did a hell of a job. You had to be careful with them, too, because some of them might opt to remain in the service. If they wanted to stay in the service, that fitness report was going to be critical to their careers.

This actually happened. The fellow who became my chief engineer on the *Howard*, came in as a reserve officer in 1941, a couple of months after I went aboard. He became chief engineer at the time I became captain, executive officer, of the ship. He transferred to the regular Navy. I named my son for him. He turned out to be a marvelous naval officer. He had a wonderful career. Did five years in the job, retired as a captain. Studied law, became a lawyer. Studied international relations, became a professor and has a Ph.D.

Was 1945 when you were assigned to the Davison?

Friday, August 13th, 1943, the fateful day, I became commanding officer of the *Howard*. In March of '45, I was promoted to lieutenant commander. I left the *Howard*—I was detached on the first of May, 1945—and went to Charleston and took command of the *USS Davison, DMS37* in June of 1945.

That ship is the one that you took to Japan?

That's the ship that went to Japan. I got command of the *USS Davison* before the end of World War II. I was in Norfolk Harbor at the naval base on VJ Day, getting ready to proceed to the Pacific. We went to Tokyo and spent two months, November and December of 1945, clearing the Yellow Sea of Japanese laid mines. The Japs had, like, planted ten thousand mines in the Yellow Sea. It was in our interest to clear the paths of sea lanes so that merchant ships, and other ships, could get into the Chinese ports. By the time we got there, a lot of those mines had drifted. I don't remember the total number of mines that our task force cleared, but I know my ship cleared thirty-nine mines. It was a hairy operation. We lost three little mine sweepers in there. This is now months after the war ended.

We came back from Japan in March of 1946, by which time we were demobilizing people lickety-split. We were to appear in San Francisco in March. We couldn't get the ship underway because we didn't have enough people aboard to take the ship out to sea. I was detached the first of June, and the ship didn't get underway until September. [laughter]

My last tour of duty in the Navy, I was the Senior U. S. Naval Advisor to the Argentine Navy in Buenos Aires for four and a half years. The reason I was there for four and a half years was that I'd been sent there for three years, but when my name came up

for promotion to admiral, I didn't make it. So I had a year and a half left to go. The U.S. Navy said, "How would you like to stay in Buenos Aires for another year and a half?"

And I said, "Delighted!"

They said, "Go talk to your friends and see if they want you."

And my friends said, "Sure enough." So we stayed four and a half years. I retired on 1 July 1969.

When that tour was over, instead of coming home, I fulfilled a lifelong ambition. We got on a ship in Valparaiso, Chile, sailed up the west coast of South America through the Panama Canal, and ended up in Genoa, Italy, thirty days later. This was on a little Italian transport, a cargo passenger ship, and I gained thirty pounds. [laughter] I had arranged with Fiat of Argentina to pick up a little Fiat on August 15th, '69. We traveled for five months, covered 13,000 miles, thirteen countries, got tired and decided to come home. We didn't go to Greece, Turkey, or Israel, which were on our itinerary, because we were just too tired.

We came home and were heading for the Bay Area. We both thought that was where we would like to settle. This is 1970. We stopped by Reno. Lois' family was here. I said, "Look, Lois, let's stay right where we are."

She said, "What the hell are you going to do, Fred?"

I said, "You know something? I've often wondered about that when I was looking forward to retirement. I decided I would even pump gas if I had to. So if I have to pump gas, we'll pump gas in Reno."

FRANCIS P. SIGNORE

Ken Adams: You can start by telling us who you are, where you were born, and when you were born.

Francis Paul Signore: Well, my name is Francis Paul Signore. I was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, on January 23, 1923. Waterbury, Connecticut, during the war years was noted as the brass center of the world. Anything from lip stick cases to artillery and gun shells, if it was made out of brass, they made it in Waterbury. I went to high school. I wasn't a very good student, but I graduated and I got a diploma. I always did want to join the Navy, so as soon as I got out of school, that's what I did.

You were telling me that your father died in 1928.

I wasn't quite five years old yet . . . four and a half, and my father died, in 1928, from double pneumonia.

What was your father's name?

My father's name was John. He was born in Italy. Yes. My mother's name was Margaret. She was an American citizen, born in Brooklyn, New York. I had four sisters and one brother; there was six of us. After my father passed away, my mother raised us. Of course, we had a lot of help from the city. They'd give us a bag of chow every week or two. It wasn't the very best, but we survived on it; we never went hungry.

Everything that my mother cooked, she cooked in a big pot, you know. She made her own bread and, like, when vegetables were in season, whether it'd be spinach or broccoli, she'd cook up a whole bunch of that, with salt pork. It would have a lot of juice in it so when us kids would say, "The bread is too hard. We can't eat it." (They didn't have no plastic in those days.)

My mother would tell us, "You dump that bread in that and it will get nice and soft."

And that's how we survived. Of course, we ate a lot of beans and we ate a lot of spaghetti. We had spaghetti three times a week . . . on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and



FRANCIS P. SIGNORE, U. S. NAVY,
WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT, 1944

Sundays. On Sundays we had meatballs, but on Tuesdays and Thursdays, it was just the tomato sauce and a lot bread.

You said that you had a job in high school working in a gas station?

Yes. While I was going to high school, I worked in a gas station and I got a couple dollars a week. Yes. What money I used to earn, I used to give a good part of it to my mother. We didn't get to keep our own money because it went for the support of our family.

Sure. Did your brothers and sisters start to work, too?

Oh, yes. Yes. My oldest sister, I think she was fourteen, had to quit school to help my mother. But my other sisters, they graduated from high school. We're all two years apart. My brother, who was two years older than me, well, he was a worse student than I was. He never went. But anyway, my two younger sisters, they graduated from high school. So there was four out of the six that graduated from high school. Yes.

I also had a paper route in my younger days. When I was real young, I was in business for myself—I had me a shoeshine box. I used to go down to the corner where the guys hung out and shine shoes for a nickel.

After you graduated from high school and went in the Navy, that was a career for you? That was a place where you could get a job?

Yes.

Did you think you were going to be in for twenty years when you first joined?

Well, not when I first joined. The Navy was a challenge. I wanted to go; I wanted to travel. I'd never been out of Waterbury, Connecticut. We never could afford to go anywhere. As soon as I got in the Navy and found out that things were real good as far as I was concerned, hell, I liked it. Hell, them first few months I was in the Navy, I said, "I'm going to do twenty." They fed me three times a day and that was the most clothes I ever had in my life! They gave me a whole sea bag full of clothes, and two pair of shoes. I never had two pair of shoes, you know. [laughter]

Where did you do your initial training?

Oh, in Newport, Rhode Island.

What was that like?

Like I say, it was all strange to me. [laughter] I couldn't understand none of it. "I'll just follow the crowd and do whatever they tell me to do." And that's what I did. Yes.

How long was it?

It was two months.

What did they teach you to do?

It was mostly training with a Springfield rifle them first three weeks. The first three weeks you're in quarantine, you know, and you didn't go anywhere or do anything except stay in this one area. Yes. The doctors were always looking at us; checking us for colds and flu, I guess.

They teach you to march and they teach you to fire a weapon?

Yes.

Did they teach you to pack your sea bags?

Well, that came after them first three weeks. We slept in a hammock, see, because in those days they still had hammocks on ships. While we was in training, we slept in a hammock. They showed you how to get in it and how not to fall out of it. And of course, it was kind of tricky at first, how you get to jump in it. You didn't just walk up to it; you had to get on a bar and then swing yourself up in it, and then put your blanket over you. And how you put the blanket over you, you put your two feet up and let the blanket go under your feet, so it wouldn't fall on deck, you know. Yes.

After we got out of quarantine, then they started showing us how to pack a sea bag; how to roll your clothes. Like your dress blues and your whites, you'd put them underneath the mattress in that hammock so you slept on them, to get them pressed. Then your skivvies, your drawers and your skivvy shirt, you folded them and then you rolled them and you tied them with some strings. The socks, you'd fix them a certain way, yes. And the white hats, you fixed them a certain way. Yes. Everything had to fit in the sea bag. We kept having inspections every so often to make sure that we knew what the hell we were doing.

Where did you go after you graduated from there?

The submarine base in New London, Connecticut.

During boot camp, is that when you volunteered for submarine training?

Well, no. They sent a draft. See, in those days, you put in for where you want to go, you know, but then the needs of the service decides where they send you. So they had what they called a draft. They had three drafts come up. Two of them were going to cruisers and one was going to a destroyer. Another draft of ninety of us, they sent to New London, Connecticut. They went down the list. We were all listed alphabetically, see. My last name begins with an "S". I don't know just how far down the list they got, but anyway, all of the S's went to New London, Connecticut. Yes.

To the submarine school?

Yes. [laughter] At that time, we wasn't at war. See, it was the year before the war started, but we were building up the service.

I didn't ask you what date you went in.

December 10, 1940. Yes. They was building up the needs of the service. That's why they sent some of us to New London, Connecticut. So when we got to New London, Connecticut, we putted around the barracks and the piers, doing all kinds of small details, you know. Then these submarines came in from Philadelphia. They had just put them in commission. They didn't have enough people that come out of submarine school to go aboard all these submarines. There was eight submarines that came in. They was in a back channel in Philly, and they put them back in commission.

These were the First World War submarines that had been decommissioned after the war?

Yes, in 1936.

They were put in storage and then they got them back out again?

Yes, in 1940. When they came out, well, then they needed personnel for them so they asked us, "We need some volunteers for submarines."

So I said, "I'll go. How about school?"

"Well, you go aboard the submarine and see how you like it, and if you like it, well, maybe we'll send you to school."

It's a funny thing. I tell this story over and over again. Like I say, they went down the list alphabetically to send us all there. To go aboard this S13, they needed five guys, and they picked five of us S's. And there we are, see, five S's. There was one guy, his name was Schultz; he was a Dutch man. There was another guy named Suzo; he was a Portuguese. Then there was another guy name was Saintalvin, he was French

descent, you know. And then there was me, Signore, you know, and I'm of Italian descent. Then we had this goddamn Jew, Schwamm. [laughter] Oh, he was a good guy. Everybody said, "They sent the whole League of Nations down there to one submarine." [laughter] In fact, this Jewish guy, he's coming out here to visit me, yes.

None of you were trained?

No.

The original assignment was just to the base? You were sent to that base.

Yes, right.

And then this opportunity came up and you volunteered then for submarine duty?

Yes.

So now you're assigned to a submarine?

Yes.

What's the name of the submarine?

They didn't have names for this type of submarine. They called them S-boats. Yes. And mine was the S13. They had from S11 to S17. Yes. After World War I, they brought a few German U-boats back to the States and they more or less copied their design. There were three of them that they copied their design.

So this was an imitation German U-boat?

Well, it was built right along the same lines and everything; same tonnage, same lengths, same torpedo tubes, and deck gun. Yes.

What did they do with you? What assignment did they give you?

Well, when I first went aboard, right away, they needed somebody for mess cooking, you know, to help the cook. So we got assigned to do that. You got that job for a month. And then I was in the deck force. See, some guys went to the engineering force and some went to the deck force. And well, the engineering means that you're either an electrician or an engine man, you know. I went in the deck force and I'm fooling around top side and whatnot. They had this old gunner's mate that was on there and he asked me if I wanted to be gunner's mate, so I said, "Yeah, sure, why not?"

He said, "You don't want to go down in that engine room. See, those guys are always dirty and sweaty and whatnot. You stay up here with me, you get top side, you get a lot of fresh air." [laughter] We did when we wasn't submerged. Yes.

Like I say, they taught us everything. They taught us how to chip paint, paint, and how to do signalling, with the light and semaphore. Of course, I've forgotten all that now. But anyway, they taught us how to splice lines, and how to tie a knot, you know. Then when we get out on daily operations, we stand lookout watches and wheel watches. You stand wheel watches as a helmsman. Yes. Then we dove the submarine. The lookout would say, "Clear the bridge!"

You get down below into the control room, and we'd operate these main battle stations. It was all operated by hand, see. We all had a station to go to. As soon as that diving alarm went, everybody had a station to go to. And that's what I predominantly done all the time I was on that one submarine. Yes.

So this was your school?

Yes.

And you had a gunner's mate who taught you the weapons?

Yes.

What weapons did it have?

Well, we had a 4H50. That meant that the projectile was four inches, and .50 caliber. The barrel of the gun was two hundred inches long (that's excluding the chamber). The chamber's where the brass cartridge went in, see. And then the projectile was on the other end of that.

Those were primarily for shooting at airplanes?

No, at targets; small ships and whatnot, or if you saw something floating out there that would be hazardous to navigation. In those days they started dropping the belly tanks off planes, and we'd see them every once in a while. We'd fire at them for practice for us, and also to get rid of them, get them out of the sea lanes, yes.

December, 1940, you went into the Navy?

Yes.

In January and in February, you were in training. Then you came back and were assigned to a submarine base. By spring you were on S13.

Yes. Our first assignment was a school boat there in New London, Connecticut. We took some students out, but then our whole squadron Do you remember the lend lease bill with Great Britain? That's when we gave them fifty World War I destroyers. They

called them four stackers. And in return, they leased these bases to us, overseas. Bermuda was one of the bases that we had just taken over under the lend lease bill. So we went down there for a couple of months with our mother ship, the submarine tender. They took care of our needs while we were there, as far as food and provisions and torpedoes and ammunition, you know. Anything that we needed, we went to the tender.

You had five submarines in your group?

No, there was seven.

Seven submarines and one mother ship?

Yes.

And the mother ship provided fuel, food . . . ?

Anything that we needed, yes. We had a pharmacist's mate, but if somebody got hurt or something and needed extra medical care, then they'd send them to the tender.

A pharmacist's mate would be like a corpsman who did first aid?

Yes, right. They call them, I think, hospital corpsmen now. Yes.

Once you got to Bermuda, then what did you do?

German U-boats was all over the Atlantic at that time. We had orders that if we ever encountered one of them, to go ahead and blast it out of the water. Yes.

And you had orders to fire on them before war was ever declared?

Oh, yes. Because we lost the *Greer* and the *Reuben James*, I think. They was on convoy duty going to Greenland and up in that area. They were two destroyers that the Germans sank. I don't know if they purposefully sank them or if they got in the way of a torpedo . . . sometimes you don't know just exactly what happened. But anyway, they were sunk due to German U-boats.

And you said that, in December, you were in the Panama Canal Zone.

Well, the following year, yes. This was in, say, the summer of 1941. From Bermuda we went back to New London, Connecticut. There was already some submarines operating out of Coco Solo in the Canal Zone. Then with the mother ship, we went down there to relieve them, these seven submarines from S11 to S17. Our mother ship, her name was *USS Beaver*. They called her "*Old Ma Beaver*" because we used to tie up to her and well, she more or less hovered over us. We went down to Panama and that was in September. On December 7, was when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

Did you guys get shore leave when you got to a new port?

Oh, yes. Like on the way down from New London we stopped in St. Thomas, in the Virgin Islands. We stayed there a couple days. I was always one of the first ones ashore.

Did you have a good time?

Oh, yes. I didn't mind being away from home or anything. That's one thing, all the time I was in the Navy, I never got homesick, you know. When I joined the Navy I said, "This is for me and whether I like it or not,

I'll never tell anybody I don't like it." But I liked it. Yes.

Did you write letters home?

Oh, yes. I always wrote to my mother, and I always sent her money.

In those days, didn't you have to send an allotment, anyway?

No. When I first got assigned to this submarine, I was still apprentice seaman. You're an apprentice seaman the first four months. I was only drawing twenty-one dollars a month, see. But as soon as I got assigned to this submarine, I got an extra five dollars, for being on a sea-going submarine. [laughter]

You got to be rich now?

Yes. [laughter]

You get to places like St. Thomas, you had money in your pocket and . . .

Of course, the pay was small, but you get a beer for a dime or fifteen cents, and things like that. Everything was very, very reasonable. Yes. Of course, then we got down to Panama and it was a wide open city, Panama was. There was no age limit on anything. Hell, if you could walk up to a bar and the bartender could barely see your eyes and you ordered a drink, he'd serve it as long as you had the money to pay. [laughter]

What were you doing in Panama? What were you there for?

We were in defense of the Panama Canal as soon as the war started. We didn't even

know because of the time difference, see. I think it was about three hours difference between Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and Panama. So me and these other two guys, well, we were going ashore. We put on our dress whites and got all cleaned up. We were going ashore that Sunday morning. We get up to the gates, and this marine says, "Where in the hell do you guys think you're going?" I could see the trucks with marines on them going back and forth, and a lot of people hurrying here and hurrying there. We paid no attention to it. The main gate wasn't very far from this. We hadn't got the word on the submarine, not until we got up at the gate. And the marine said, "Where in the hell do you guys think you're going?"

"Well, we're going to shore. Here's my liberty card."

"Turn right around and go back to that submarine," he said. "The Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor."

I said, "Oh, come on! Don't give us that."

He said, "Yes."

So sure enough, we went back and yes, then everybody was hustling and bustling. We got the red alert. We manned the submarine right away, within a few days, with provisions and fuel and whatnot.

Did you do anything immediately? I've heard that in some places they were afraid of immediate attack, so they got the ships away from the ports.

No, they didn't do that with us. I think it was on account that we were so far away from Pearl Harbor. I really don't know. But they didn't hurry us out to sea. Immediately after they bombed Pearl Harbor, they sent up these barrage balloons all around the locks in Panama. They looked like a small dirigible. They was all at different heights, anchored to a cable, set all through the

whole Canal. That was for in case any dive bombers and whatnot tried to bomb the Canal. But fortunately enough, they never did do that.

They had a couple of air stations down there. There were always planes in the air, patrolling. Yes. As soon as we got ready, then we started going out and making thirty to forty day patrol runs in the Pacific. Yes. They'd keep us stationed in different areas, you know, just to have all of us as spotters. Well, the only thing that we could spot was what we could see because we had no radar. We didn't have nothing; no air conditioning. [laughter] That's why I say we never had nothing.

Even your maximum depth was only a hundred . . .

About two hundred and thirty feet . . . Our hull, I think it was only three-eighths of an inch thick. If we went any deeper than that . . . Especially, being in commission all of those years and then being in a back channel for four years, doing nothing, they didn't really test the hull. We only went down to 150 feet; 175 feet at the most.

You'd only been in a year . . .

Yes.

And suddenly there's a war. Did you expect a war?

No.

You were just a young kid. You were just thinking about going to St. Thomas and . . .

Well, like I said, I was nothing but a snot-nosed kid.

Thinking about nothing, but having a good time and . . .

Yes. I was enjoying myself. They said, "Well, we're at war now." And well, we were doing the same things after the war started as we did before the war, only for longer periods of time, you see.

How long would the patrols have been, earlier?

Oh, up to ten days.

Would all seven submarines leave together?

No.

You'd go separately . . .

Yes, we'd go separate because we have to relieve one another. They'd have two or three of us out there, certain distances apart. Then one of the other submarines would relieve us.

You had enough fuel, enough ammunition, enough food, for thirty to forty days. You don't see anybody else but your shipmates?

The only thing we saw were the airplanes that came over, patrolling, out of Panama. We didn't have no radar. We'd see them through the glasses. They'd be up there, you know, and then they'd flop their wings at us. Yes. [laughter]

They didn't want you to make a mistake about who they were.

No. [laughter]

They weren't being friendly; they were being safe. And as a gunner's mate, part of your job would have been to watch the air and look for what was up there.

Yes. Well, if we went to battle stations (gun action we'd call them), we manned what machine guns we had. We had .30 caliber machine guns plus the 4H50.

Did they begin to give you some training in plane identification?

Well, all the time, yes.

Did you get where you were pretty good at knowing what all the planes looked like?

Our planes, yes. Because at that time, we didn't have too many, you know. Yes. Besides the PBY and Liberator Bomber, I think we had a couple of others, we owned a P-30 and had P-40s.

What was life like on one of those thirty or forty day patrols?

You stood watch as four on, eight off. In other words, the four hours on, if we was on surface, I would go up and for those four hours be either the starboard lookout or port lookout or on the wheel, the helmsman, see. We would rotate every thirty minutes. You could start at lookout and would go down to the helmsman. The helmsman would go up to the port lookout. We'd make one circle.

Did they do that to keep you alert?

It was just killing the four hours. It was to keep alert, and, also, it was just steady routine. If you had to go to the bathroom on a submarine, if you really had to do your business, well, then they'd get you a relief, see. But if you just had to take a leak, you just hung it over the side and that was it. Of course, you had to make sure the wind was blowing the right way. [laughter] They didn't

like to have people going through the captain's tower, relieving one another while they was on watch, in case you had to clear the bridge. Yes. You stood from twelve to four, four to eight, and eight to twelve, see. So if you had the twelve to four and if you were submerged, well, you had to go in and man the steering control. The helmsman could steer from the bridge in the control room. You go to the main battle stations, and you keep rotating. They always had a job for you to do.

What did you do on your eight hours off?

One thing you had to do was clean up the boat—we called them boats, you know—as much as possible. The fuel oil and lube oil leaks. There were leaks all the time. There was always fuel oil and lube oil in the bilges, so the bilges always had to be cleaned. Yes. We'd swab them out. It always had to be cleaned, as much as possible, because cleanliness in the Navy, well, it comes as number one.

In the early days the reason why they called them pig boats is because we damned near lived like a pig. We had no water for showers, and what fresh water we did have, was just for drinking and cooking and washing the dishes. We'd get up to go on watch and the hot water in the sinks was secured completely—no hot water. We'd get just about a cupful or two, you know, to wash your teeth and get the sleepers out of your eyes and whatnot. And for showers . . . well, we had no showers. We'd get just a little bit of water that the engineers rigged up from the condensation to the ventilation system, because on this damn boat we didn't have no air conditioning. Anyway, there would be a drip and it used to go into a bucket, see, and that's what we used. We'd get a little bit, as much as a hatful, you know. We would wash down the possible and then wash up the

possible and if there was any water left, you washed the possible. You more or less took what we used to call a marine douche. Yes.

So you didn't have any showers at all for thirty or forty days?

That's right.

You were pretty glad to get back to warm water?

Oh, yes. We were really cruddy. Yes, as soon as we'd get into the Panama Canal we'd get into Gatun Lake there; it was all fresh water. Oh hell, we had swim call right away, even while we're going through the lake, in the super structure. The fresh water would be going through there and we'd get down in there and . . .

With no air conditioning in these submarines, it means that every time that you were under the water it was hot?

Oh, yes. With a submarine, you run on the surface with diesel engines because diesel engines have to have air, see. When you're submerged, you got to shift to the battery. Your propulsion is on the battery and those batteries get hot. When we were submerged we'd go as slow as possible to stay in a certain area. We had an area to stay in, and we would just make a knot or two knots, you know, just enough to keep headway. That way, you preserve the battery. Of course, you can go at high speed, you know, which on this thing was only about six or seven knots, submerged. You could only do it for an hour, then you used up all the juice in the battery and you would have to surface. That's the reason for going so slow, like a knot or two knots, submerged. Yes.

As soon as you surface, then they transfer the power to the diesels and recharge those batteries?

Yes, right.

How long does it take to recharge the battery?

It all depends . . . sometimes you could throw in a fast charge on a battery. They didn't like to do that. They liked to charge the battery all night long, six to seven hours. We'd steam on one engine and charge the battery on the other engine. Yes.

After thirty, forty days on patrol, you come back to the Canal, to Panama City. Did you get to go into Panama City?

Yes. Panama City and Balboa are on the Pacific side and Colon and Cristobol was on the Atlantic side. Yes.

You were on the Atlantic side?

We patrolled on the Pacific side. We'd go through the Canal to go out on patrol and then come back to our base through the Canal again.

So you must have been through the Canal quite a few times.

Oh, yes.

What was it like going through the Canal?

Well, it's going into the locks. After you went in, you're in just like a big dock, or a big well. It's a big, rectangular shaped enclosure full of water, with gates on either end of it. The first time that I went through, they said, "Well, they're going to bring the mules alongside to pull us through."

I said, "Mules? What in the hell are you talking about? I don't see no mules."

Pretty soon here comes these little engines, on a railroad track on either side of the Canal. Then they throw some lines over to us. First of all, if you went in on the Atlantic side, they would flood the lock, to bring you up to another level. There were three locks on the Atlantic side, one in the middle, and then two on the other end on the Pacific side. The lake is about eighty-five feet higher than sea level. So they'd bring you up about thirty feet, and then these mules would pull you into the next lock, and they'd close the gates. Then they'd flood it again. These mules would pull you into the next one. As soon as you got to the level of the lake, that's when we'd be on our own. Of course, every time we went through there, we had a pilot that took us through. We didn't go through on our own. You went up three locks on the Atlantic side and then down three locks on the other side. Yes.

How many men were on the submarine?

About forty-two.

You got to know each other pretty well?

Oh, yes.

And you five S's are together the whole time you're on this vessel?

Yes. The League of Nations

Were some of the crew more experienced than you guys?

Oh, yes. There were a few of the guys that they had called back in who were already retired, you know. They were in what they called the Fleet Reserve Association. They had

put in their twenty years in the Navy, went out and then they got called back in. We had a few of those guys. Then there were other guys that had four years, six years, ten years. And then there was us seamen.

How long did you stay around the Canal doing patrols?

Well, we'd stay in about two to three weeks. Every once in a while they'd get a German U-boat scare, in the Atlantic out there, and they would send us out right away. Yes. One of those times, I guess we were submerged and they were submerged and we were playing tag with one another. Our listening devices, our sounding gear, somehow, wasn't too good, but we could hear other ships. Say we were laying quiet, and we could hear them. Well, we'd start up and try to go after them. Then they would stop. Then we would stop. And it would work back and forth. I guess, finally, they went one way and we went the other way.

How many patrols did you do from Panama?

Six of them.

That covers a full year.

Yes. A little over a year. Then I went to this submarine, the *Raton*.

Where was that stationed?

Well, it was built in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. I don't know if you're familiar with that area, but it was a division of the electric boat company that built submarines in New London, Connecticut. They started up a yard in Manitowoc and they built some submarines. They didn't launch them straight on down like you see in the movies and in the news. These

were launched sideways. In other words, when they launched them, they cut the lines loose and then they floated into the water broadside.

Were you assigned to it before it was commissioned?

No. The *Raton* was down in Panama. They were going through the Canal, just getting ready to go, for exercises and for more training of the crew. And they needed a gunner's mate on it. So they just transferred me to it.

It was a newly commissioned submarine?

Yes, newly commissioned in early 1943.

It was the same size? Did they have a forty-two man crew?

No. We had eighty-six men and seven officers.

You were on as assistant gunner's mate?

By then I was second class gunner's mate. We had the same size gun on the *Raton* as we did on the S13. Yes.

Did you have the same number or did you have more guns on the Raton?

It just had one. But we had 20 millimeter guns on the *Raton*, which we didn't have on the S13.

Did you have the same number of torpedoes?

On the S13, we only had four torpedo tubes. We kept four in a rack. Then we had one torpedo tube in the after torpedo room. We didn't have none in the rack there because was no room for them back there. That submarine

was so obsolete we couldn't load the torpedo intact. When we loaded back aft we had to load the warhead first, and they'd take it all the way aft. Then we'd load the after body. After we got it down below, then they'd put both of them in skids and mount the warhead to the torpedo. But forward, you mount them all intact.

And on the Raton, how many torpedo tubes and how many torpedoes?

We carried twenty-four torpedoes, six tubes forward and ten in the racks . . . spares. Back aft we had four tubes and four in the racks. That's twenty-four. But the torpedoes on the S13, they were only about thirteen feet long. S13 wasn't very big, you know. But on the *Raton*, the torpedoes were twenty-one feet long. Yes.

Were the torpedoes on the Raton better torpedoes? I heard say, the early torpedoes, they had a lot more duds and they weren't . . .

The first part of the war the firing mechanism didn't work. Well, they had, I wouldn't say several different ways, but they had a few different ways to get that firing mechanism to work. In the head of the torpedo, they had an impaler in there, see. You would fire the torpedo and it would go out about three hundred feet, see, and this impaler would turn and it was supposed to arm the torpedoes. The reason why you had to go out about three hundred feet was on account of they didn't want it to go off as soon they fired it and blow the bow off, you know. So anyway, everything that could go wrong with a torpedo was going wrong with it. Some of them were duds; they'd hit the ships and bounce off.

You could set a torpedo to run below the surface of the water at eight feet, six feet, ten

feet, twelve feet, eighteen feet, twenty feet. On the big draft ships, you could get down to as far as twenty feet. We'd set the torpedoes, like, for a tanker. You had to set it kind of deep, see. You would set it, say, for fourteen feet, because tankers draw a lot of water. But then what was happening, they were running too deep. They were running underneath the ship. Then the firing mechanisms weren't working; they were bouncing off the sides of the ships. And this impaler I was telling you about, some of them, as soon as the torpedo armed itself, it blew up three hundred feet from the submarine.

Then we had what they called the erratic runs. You'd fire the torpedo. The very first torpedo we fired on the *Raton* was at night; we were making a night approach at this tanker, see. We were so close to the water, that they couldn't see us. The Japs didn't have a radar then, anyway. We made this night approach. The tankers look like a mountain, you know. I was up on lookout, "Goddamn! When the hell are they going to fire those torpedoes. We'll go ahead and get a baseball and throw it at it and hit it," you know.

Anyway, the very first torpedo we fired, the damn thing was an erratic run. It went "Voom!" right off the starter. We fired six, at ten second intervals. The second one, as soon as it armed itself, it blew up. We were already turning; we turned as soon as we started firing the torpedoes. And anyway, to make a long story short, we had so many problems with those torpedoes that we fired twenty-three torpedoes at this five ship convoy and only sank two ships. Yes. The captain brought one torpedo back in to let them check it.

Do you remember what month and year you were assigned to the Raton?

Yes. It was in the spring of 1943.

How long were you on the Raton?

Just about a year.

You said you were only involved in half of the battles, but it still looks to me like there are twenty-seven battle flags from the Raton.

Those other ships we sank on the next patrol. Yes.

The first patrol run was in the spring of 1943?

Yes.

You were patrolling where? Where were you?

Rabaul and a group of islands down there by New Guinea. And yes, we had sank one ship the day before we had all of the trouble with the five ships. We sank three ships on that patrol run. Yes.

How long was that patrol run?

Oh, it was only about thirty days.

After you fired all those torpedoes, you had to go back anyways because you . . .

We had just taken Manila Bay, see. They had sent one of the mother ships up there, and we went and got alongside the tender. We got all new torpedoes and fresh food and ammunition and fueled up. Then we went out on another patrol run. Yes. See, right away we went from Panama to Brisbane, Australia. We stopped in the Galapagos Islands off of South America, we topped off on fuel, then we went straight into Brisbane. Two days out of Brisbane the sea was just like a sea of glass, and here comes these two wakes; they went straight across our stern. The Japanese submarine fired

two torpedoes at us. We didn't know that they was there or anything, except when we saw the wakes. And when we saw the wakes, well, we evaded as much as we could and went to four engine speed. Yes. Fortunately, they missed us.

This submarine has a depth of three or four hundred feet?

Yes. This type of submarine test depth was at 412 feet.

They probably were safer deeper than that. Did you feel more comfortable with this one?

Oh, yes. It was brand new. It had air conditioning, you know. We didn't have all the water we wanted; the water situation was the same on this new one as the old one.

Still no showers, but at least you were cooler.

Yes. That's right. And that's when the engineers rigged up on the air conditioning system for the condensation to drip into a bucket.

On your first patrol, you were pretty successful. Do you remember any other patrols?

In the next patrol run, that's when we sank those other ships. We had real good luck. Yes. The torpedoes functioned better and everything.

When you're firing the torpedoes, are you submerged or are you on the surface?

Well, both, it all depends on the situation, see. Because sometimes if it's a moon at night, you couldn't make a night approach on the surface. What we would do, say if we picked the convoy up at dusk or before dusk, or if you

saw them through the periscope while they was going by, we'd take bearings on them and whatnot to find out their course and try to figure out their speed. Then after it got dark, we would surface, try to make an end run, and go around them if they was going slow enough. As soon as we surfaced, we'd throw the battery charger and run away, get around them, and then submerge and wait for them to come by. Or if it was a dark night, we'd go in on the surface.

And when that happened, then you'd be standing on deck?

Not on deck, in the conning tower.

So you'd be standing watch. You didn't have earphones so you couldn't listen to the commands down below.

No.

So you were just standing there waiting for something to happen?

Yes, when I was on the bridge. But if I was down below, you know, then I could hear everything that's going on. Yes.

If you're submerging, you're down below.

Yes.

You're not actually on . . .

See, my below decks watch was in the control room. Like on the *Raton* and the *Black Fin*, my job was depth control.

On that third patrol you said you got the rest of those ships. How many do you think you sank on that patrol?

Well, there was ten of them, I think it was. We had a good, good run.

That was in a thirty or forty day period of time, too?

Yes.

The same thing. It was a long patrol and . . .

Yes, right. Sometimes you're out there and you don't see nothing but seagulls, especially if you're in an area where you have to stay. They give you a patrol area in the shipping lanes and you had to stay submerged. You couldn't cover any kind of a distance, you know, and nothing would come by. Then all of a sudden, here comes a convoy and then you go to battle stations, and everything's "Bang! Bang! Bang!" I mean, you hear the diving alarm and the collision alarm and all the bells go off for battle stations. See, when you're submerged, you go to battle stations. Everybody on the ship has got to fight.

When submarine patrolling, you're given a specific area where shipping normally takes place and you can expect that sometimes the Japanese will be travelling through. You have no idea of what you might run into.

That's right.

Do you have airplanes who will cover you? Do you get any intelligence?

Well, every once in a while we would get some kind of intelligence, you know. From what I heard, they said that we had broken the Japanese code, you know. A couple of times they told us there was a convoy coming through and to be at a certain longitude and latitude at a certain time, these ships would

be coming by. Well, sometimes they'd come by and sometimes they didn't.

When you had specific intelligence, did you have more submarines in one place?

No.

You still kept out there by yourself?

We only had fifty-one combat submarines when World War II started. That means park this here, you know. And say half of them were always in port, and the other half were out on patrol. See. So that would only leave you, say, twenty-five submarines to patrol that whole damn Pacific, from Japan down to Singapore and as far this way as we could go. It took you, like to go from Pearl Harbor to the coast of Japan—like quite a few of the submarines did—eighteen to twenty-one days to get there. You have to be submerged during the day and what speed you made was at night; and making twelve knots, that's only twelve miles an hour. You don't cover too much distance. What I'm trying to say, is it took you a long time to get out there. Yes.

Tactically, it doesn't appear that the submarines were very useful to the rest of the big Navy. They could send you out to do these patrols, but it would be hard to move you very far.

Well, they used us for reconnaissance. Every time they made an invasion some place, our submarines were there taking pictures of the coasts, of the harbors, and landing these demolition teams, the UDT guys, we called them, scout parties.

Did you ever have an occasion to carry those UDT parties and take them into . . . ?

No, we never did. But we made one reconnaissance patrol run during the Battle of the Philippines. We was told to go off the coast of Mindoro. At first we didn't know who to meet, you know. They told us what recognition signals we was supposed to have. But the first night we couldn't get the recognition signals straight. Then the second night, we done it. We stayed submerged all day. Then the second night, we went to battle stations . . . gun action. Pretty soon here comes this little fishing boat out, a real small thing and coming in close. Of course, we got the deck guns manned and all the machine guns manned. I'm up topside there on the guns, you know. Pretty soon this boat kept getting closer and closer, and they wasn't saying nothing on the bridge. They was getting close so I yelled over, "Who the hell are you?"

So then this one guy said, "Oh, we're so and so."

Then these Filipinos started talking in Filipino, and pretty soon they came alongside. This one guy in shorts—he was a white man—turned out to be an Army captain. He was with the guerrilla forces in the Philippines. He came aboard, went right up to the bridge, and our captain started talking to him and whatnot. Came to find out he had some stuff that they had to give us, see. So anyway, we picked up six mail bags, canvas bags all secured with locks and everything. They told us to take them in. And in return, we gave them what little food we had left. We gave them ammunition and cigarettes and clothes. We was already out sixty days then, so we didn't have too much stuff left.

After we left there, we got as far as an island in the South Pacific there—from what group I don't know—north of Australia. Anyway, we met an Australian gun boat. We never knew what we took out. We passed all these mail sacks to them and then they bid

us farewell. And then when we got in, after a week or so, we found out that they invaded Mindoro in the Philippines. Now whether or not we brought that information out or what, I don't know. But anyway, we brought out some kind of plans. It was all top secret.

As enlisted men, you don't know a lot about what the captain is doing. How did it feel to never know what was going on?

Well, as soon as we leave port, we always knew we was going into Japanese waters because there was no other place to go. That's where we done our work, was in Japanese waters. But we never knew what area we was going in until after we got out, you know, and it seemed like it was a very, very long way. Well, it all depends if we had to stop at a place to refuel. We'd stop at a place, like in Fremantle in western Australia. We'd leave there, then we'd go up the coast up to Exmouth Gulf. We had a tanker there and we would top off on fuel, and then go through Lombok Straits into the Java Sea and then start our patrol run. But anyway, as soon we'd leave, say Fremantle, to go out on patrol, we never knew where we was going. We knew we was going up to, well, the Australians called this place "Pot Shot." Then after we top off on fuel, then the captain would tell us where we was going, or what area we was going to be in.

See, we'd have to go through those Lombok Straits. We're already in the Indian Ocean and we go by the island of Lombok and Bali. Going through there, they had a six knot current going from the north to the south. We couldn't go through submerged. We couldn't make that speed and still have any kind of a battery left when we did, because it would take us all night to go through it, see. We would stay submerged until we get to the entrance. It would be nightfall. Then we'd surface. Then

we would depend on everything we had, you know. We'd go on three engines and charge the batteries on one engine. Going through there, we'd run into Japanese . . .

What was your top speed?

Around nineteen to twenty knots.

In that current you're down to twelve or thirteen or so . . .

Yes. And going through there we always ran into Japanese patrol boats and fishing boats and whatnot. We'd be zig zagging all around them to get around them. Yes.

You didn't want to deal with them, so you just stayed away from them.

That's right. Yes. Because we didn't want them to know that another submarine was going through there. Of course, they knew we was going through there because that was the only way from the west coast of Australia to get up into the Java Sea, and patrol around Singapore and whatnot. I didn't like to patrol in the Java Sea and that South China Sea around Borneo, the water is too shallow. It was only 125 feet, maybe 150 feet deep. You can't hide. [laughter]

Do you remember about when you went to the Black Fin?

Yes. I made a few patrol runs on the *Raton*, then I got transferred. I went back to the States, back to New London, Connecticut, for what they call "new construction". I got back to New London around March or April of 1944. I had been gone from the States since September of 1941, so I had been gone a long time. Yes.

Did you get a leave and a chance to go home and see your mother?

When I got back, yes, but not in between, no. Well, that's just the way things worked out.

When you went back for the "new construction," you didn't get a chance to go home then?

When I was on the S13 and went to Panama, then went to the *Raton*, no, I didn't have any leave. I got transferred in Perth, western Australia, off the *Raton*. I was unfortunate enough to catch the troop train. It carried Australian soldiers and American sailors and marines and whatnot, you know. The troop train took us all the way to Brisbane, which took six days to do.

Australia has six states in it, you know. And each state that you was in, there was a certain gage of railroad. So every time you come to the end of the line, you had to transfer to another train, see. So anyway, we had to do that quite a few times going across country. But how they fed us, we'd stop at these Australian Army camps. They'd just stop the train and we'd eat and do whatever we had to do and then go along again, yes. [laughter]

Every time the train would stop, we'd get with these Aussie diggers (they called the soldiers, diggers). They had a game down there—I don't know if you ever heard of it—called Two Up. What it was, they'd get these two Australian pennies, and they put them on a flat piece of board, like a little paddle, you know, and they'd flip them up in the air. When they'd land, they either land on heads or tails and this is what you would bet on . . . heads or tails. [laughter] So anyway, we entertained ourselves.

After you got to Brisbane, then they sent you by . . .

They sent us by ship. I rode an Army transport back to San Francisco.

Then you went by train from San Francisco back to . . .

I was on my own. They gave me thirty days leave, yes, to report into the *Black Fin*.

So before you reported in, you went home?

Yes. I went home, saw my mother and whatnot. Then I went to New London, Connecticut.

Was your brother in the service?

Yes, in 1943 he went in the Navy, too.

Were any of your sisters still at home or are they all grown up and gone away?

Well, my oldest sister was married, yes. But my other three sisters . . . they weren't. Two of them were still in high school.

Were they pretty proud of you and glad to see you and all that?

Oh, yes. [laughter] I was one of the first ones to leave, you know, as a volunteer. And then when I got back, oh boy! they couldn't introduce me to enough people. "This is my brother. Not very big, but he's my big brother." [laughter] Yes, they was real proud of me. Especially, I was a submarine man and oh, they wanted to know what I was doing and how many ships we sank and whatnot. Of course, I didn't tell them anything, you know, because in those days you couldn't say anything.

So then you went back?

Yes. While they was building the submarine, I got assigned to it. While I was being assigned to it, they sent us to all different kind of schools; fire fighting school for five days, and then they had what they called attack training, it's the bow and stern planes, depth control. Of course, I already knew about it, but they sent you anyway. They sent us to 20 millimeter school back to Newport, Rhode Island, just to keep us occupied. We'd go back down to the submarine when we wasn't in school.

We finally got on the submarine. It was still on the waves, and they was ready to launch it. I was fortunate enough when they launched it, to be up on the forward deck. I rode all the way down the waves. Yes. That was quite a thrill. Then we went to New London, Connecticut, where they finished fitting it out. Well, we was already in New London . . . I meant up the river to the submarine base. We put it in commission, on July 4, 1944. I was allowed to bring a few visitors down for the commissioning. I brought my uncle down and my sisters. That was quite a thrill for them, yes, especially my uncle. He was a railroad man all of his life, you know. Well, when he told his railroad friends and buddies how he went down to that *Black Fin*, and he'd done this and he'd done that, it was quite a thrill for him. Yes. So then we left . . .

And for the commissioning, you're all on deck and they have a formal ceremony and all that?

Yes, the captain reads his orders off and accepts the submarine and they raised the colors.

A third of the crew was old hands like me, and then two-thirds of the crew, they come out of school and whatnot. So we had, what they call, "on the way training" out of New London there. Anyway, we'd go out for two or

three days. We went up in Newport, Rhode Island. We went through the Cape Cod Canal. We went up to Provincetown, Massachusetts. We went to Newport to pick up torpedoes and to Provincetown to fire them . . . dummy torpedoes, you know . . . exercise shots. And we done that for about three weeks. Then we went back to New London. We loaded up with everything; food and fuel and torpedoes and the works. When we left New London, we didn't know where we was going. Of course, we had a good idea.

You were one submarine by yourself or were you with other submarines?

By ourself. This is early 1944; they had just started wolf packs. But going down the east coast, you was always by yourself. Yes.

You knew you were going back to the Pacific?

Yes. We had six U.S. submarines operating out of Londonderry, Ireland, I think it was, or Scotland. Well, the Germans didn't have no shipping, see. All those submarines was doing was reconnaissance work. They sank a couple of German U-boats, and they was in the invasion of Africa. Every time there was an invasion, our submarines was there doing reconnaissance work, yes.

You were pretty sure you were going back to the Pacific. Where did you go?

Well, we went back to Panama, first. Of course, I went and saw all my old girlfriends; it was just like all home week. We stayed there a couple of days, then we went through the Canal, got on the other side, and I went ashore again, on the other side.

To see all your old girlfriends on the other side.

Yes. Oh, I had a ball. [laughter]

You had girlfriends on each side of the Canal?

Yes. I don't know if you know anything about the west coast of Panama, the Pacific side. They've got about a sixteen to eighteen foot tide there. Like if you go in, you tie up to the pier like this, you go ashore, then that tide goes out. They have to keep loosening the mooring lines, you know. If the tide's down about sixteen to eighteen feet, that gang plank is like this. If you came back to the submarine kind of feeling pretty good, you had to watch yourself going down that gang plank. Yes. It's quite a drop in tide there.

From there we went to Pearl Harbor. Yes. We had on the way training. You always have on the way training for about a week or ten days because there's always people coming and going, new crew members. We went out on patrol runs by ourselves. Yes. We went to Saipan first and we topped off on fuel. The invasion of the Philippines already had started.

Here's what happened. We made two patrol runs. That's when we sank these ships. We were in the Philippines—I don't remember exactly where. But anyway, we sighted this six ship convoy. It had about five destroyers with it. The captain decided to make a night approach because it was really dark; really a blackout. And like I said earlier, the Japanese didn't have no radar so they couldn't detect us. We're going in on the surface. I didn't watch this one here, I was down below listening to all of it. Anyway, we're making this approach on this tanker and we're going to fire six torpedoes at it. We were about twelve to fourteen hundred feet from them. We fired three, and then the captain orders, "Stop. Stop firing!"

This destroyer kept heading our way and we didn't know if he saw us or not, see. After we started firing, we're turning to starboard.

We got a complete setup on this destroyer, see, and he's still coming our way; the same speed, same course, and everything. He never did see us. He got to about seven hundred feet from us and that ain't very far. Anyway, we were going to fire the other three torpedoes at it. When we fire our torpedoes, we fire one; then ten seconds later we fire another one; then ten seconds later we fire another one. But in this incident, we fired the first three and hit the tanker with one of them. By the time it hit the tanker, we already had fired at this destroyer. We fired number four at it and number five at it. He was so close to us that we didn't even get the chance to fire number six—it's ten second intervals. We hit that destroyer right below the stack and he just blew. The bow went up this way, the stern went up this way, and in less than a minute, he went right down. Yes. We sank four ships.

Pretty good.

This guy was on the S13. He wasn't one of the five S's, but this guy was a Greek. We called him Greek Paul Pappas. [laughter] When we went in to Subic Bay . . . I told you that we tied up at the tender. Well, his submarine was there and I went aboard and saw him. Yes. His submarine picked up seventy-three survivors off this Japanese cargo ship that was transporting them to Japan to work in the mines. This one Australian . . .

They were American POW's they were transporting?

American and Australian. Yes. These two Australians that I know, they was on the Australian cruiser *Perth* that got sunk with our cruiser *Houston* just right after World War II started. He worked on the bridge on the River Kwai and that railroad between Burma and Thailand. They built the railroad and the

bridge and they were going to transfer the prisoners to Japan to work in the mines. Well, this one Australian that was on the cruiser *Perth*, he was a sailor. The Japanese picked him up out of the water then, you know. Now, this Japanese cargo ship gets sunk and he was in the water again for six days. So he was on two ships that got torpedoed out from under him. And he's a good guy. In fact, I made him, both of them, honorary members of our Sacramento chapter of Submarine Veterans of WWII.

And this guy, he wasn't supposed to have a camera, but he did have one and he's the one that took all the pictures. Yes, he's the one that took all the official photos of us.

You guys weren't supposed to have cameras?

No. Everything was . . .

Anybody who's got any pictures, they took illegally?

Yes, that's right.

Anyway, we go out on our third patrol run. The invasion of the Philippines was already on, and our forces had secured Subic Bay in the Philippines. So immediately they sent a submarine tender up there, a mother ship. When we finished our second patrol run, we went into the Philippines and got refitted and resupplied from the mother ship.

When we pulled into Subic Bay there right after they secured it a little bit, we had time off. There was no hotel for us to go to. My brother was in the Navy and he was stationed down there in Manila. And there was this other couple of guys and they had brothers or relatives in Manila. So we said, "Hell, let's go to Manila."

So we hitched a ride from Subic Bay with the SeaBee's. They had some barges going back and forth over to San Antonio. Then from San

Antonio, we got on the road and found out how to get to Manila. Of course, all it is, is a dirt road. We're hitchhiking, and this Army truck comes by and he picks us up. It was a big truck. We'd go up a hill, it was real slow. So we said, "The hell with this stuff. It will take us forever to get to Manila." So we jumped off the truck. We said we'd wait for the next one to come by, you know.

About a half hour went by and here comes this smaller truck. He picked us up. "What in the hell are you guys doing here?"

"Well, we're going to Manila. I'm going down to see my brother."

He said, "You crazy so and so. There's Japs all over these hills. This place ain't really secured yet, you know. They could shoot your rear end off."

When we went out on our third patrol run, we went due east. We went straight to French Indochina. That's when we joined our first wolf pack; there was the *Blue Gill*, the *Blue Back*, and I think there was one other submarine with us. In those days the Japanese, when the war started, had all kinds of ships out there in that South Pacific. In other words, Japan's an island and it's not self-surviving. In order for Japan to survive, they've got to import everything and anything; rubber, oil, food . . . you name it. After we started taking all these islands and whatnot back, and fighting back, there wasn't as many Japanese going as there used to be, see. Because at one time, you'd run into a convoy, it'd have six or eight ships in it, you know, and two or three escorts. Then over here we ran into this one convoy; it had two ships and it had eight escorts. What they was doing, they was hugging the coast all the way up from Singapore, off of French Indochina all the way to Japan. And well, that's where we were, right off the coast where Vietnam is now. That's where we were.

We would be just a few miles, oh, maybe five, eight miles from the beach, see. Then we'd run in a line. We'd be here and then about ten miles, there'd be another submarine and another ten miles, there'd be another submarine, and another ten miles, there'd be another submarine. We never would operate bunched up together, for fear of either ramming one another or firing a torpedo at it or something. Anyway, that's the way that they done it, for safety reasons. We would rotate every day, or every couple of days. We was outboard, then we'd go to the third boat, the second boat, and then it was our turn alongside the beach.

We spot this convoy (we're submerged) and they're steaming up the coast. We're making the approach on it. We knew the water was shallow, see, but it didn't hurt us for depth control because there was enough. We wasn't worried about running aground because, from diving, we knew it was a hundred feet or better. But anyway, there was a tanker and a cargo ship, see. The priority ship to go after to try to sink was the tanker because Japan had very, very little fuel left. Tankers were priority. So we made an approach on this tanker, you know. We was just getting ready to fire. We had the outer doors open, and were going to fire six torpedoes at it. We was less than a thousand feet from it, just getting ready to fire. I'm in the control room on depth control. Every time the captain would say sixty-five feet, or sixty feet or whatnot, you had to get that depth. And he'd say, "God damn it! Don't duck me!" In other words, don't let the periscope go under because if the periscope goes under, he can't see. [laughter] It was tricky, you know.

We were just getting ready to fire, like I was saying, and then here comes this destroyer headed straight for us. And the old man said, "Take her deep! Take here deep!"

So we started to go down, you know. "That destroyer's coming right at us!" We knew the destroyer was there. When we was getting the setup on this tanker, he wasn't straying off his regular course and his speed was still the same. We track all these ships. You keep your eye on every one of them, all the time. Anyway, the destroyer headed for us, and the old man said, "Take her deep! Take her deep!"

We went hard to starboard, to get us away from the shore line as much as possible. We was already at sixty-five feet. I doubt if we got down to seventy-five feet, he was that close, you know. But anyway, the destroyer dropped a pattern of depth charges; I think it was about eight or ten of them, over us, see. No, he dropped them under us, yes. He dropped them under us because after they started exploding, they started to lift us. We started to come to the surface, see. Then this other destroyer came. They made an "x." He came out from this other angle and he dropped a pattern over us. And he dropped them a little shallow. Anyway, that second one, they pushed us down, see. We lost control momentarily; you always do once they start depth charging. You put a hard dive angle on the bottom stern planes and you're going down like a bat out of hell to get under real fast. Anyway, we lost control, but only momentarily. We bounced off the bottom, see. Here we are, we're still making standard speed. Everything happened so fast, you know. I don't know how much mud and whatnot we stirred up. But anyway, we finally come to a halt and we just stayed right there. Then here comes the depth charges, you know. They dropped them on us for almost eighteen hours, see. They never did find out exactly where we were. They knew we was in this certain vicinity and what we had done.

They had put some motor launches over the side, and they was dragging for us with the

grapnel hooks, because the water was shallow, you know. And God, one time, you could hear that grapnel hook going down the side of the hull, "Clink! Clink! Clink!" We figured what they tried to do was snag something. Then once they snagged something solid, then they would drop a buoy over the side. The escorts or destroyers would come around and pong the hell out of you. Yes. The depth charges, they kept getting closer and closer. And then they'd get farther away. I guess they thought that they heard something. However, they might have heard one of the other submarines in the wolf pack, you know. Then we'd get further away. Then they'd come back. And I swear, after they'd dropped so many of them on us, I thought they went in and got resupplied with them.

But anyway, we surfaced that night. Our forward deck gun was all turned around, it had broke its holding down case. Eighty percent of the deck was ripped off, you know. And these antennas was all down and, oh jeez, on the bridge, there's a gyro repeater, it's like a compass and you had a glass this thick on it, and it looked like somebody got a sledgehammer and punched a hole right through it, you know.

When we were down, we stayed down all day and well, we couldn't run the air conditioning, and all the refrigeration was shut off. That's when you rig for silent running. Anything that's running any kind of machinery, whether it be a fan or refrigeration unit or an air conditioning unit, if it's got a motor running, we'd secure it so they couldn't listen for us. And if you went from one compartment to another, you had to walk real slow, you know. Of course, nobody moves except go to the head, to take a leak. And God, it's got to be about a hundred and twenty degrees down there. The sweat was just rolling off of our bodies. Plus, all we wore

was just a pair of cut off dungarees, and a pair of sandals.

But anyway, when we surfaced that night the first thing we tried to do, before we even left the area, was to try to get those torpedoes doors closed, or shoot them. I told you we had all six torpedo tubes ready to go. The fear was that if we was underway, with that impaler in the nose of that warhead, it would arm itself. But anyway, we couldn't get the doors closed. The torpedo had moved just a little bit, just enough, so we couldn't get the doors closed, see. This happened on five of the tubes. We finally put our ass end to the tide, you know, to the current and went out a little bit. When I said our ass end, I meant the stern. Anyway, we went out away from the shore line a little bit. As soon as we got the batteries charged, we dove again. In the torpedo, it's got a gyro you set for it's course, whichever way you wanted it to go. When you fire a torpedo, you can fire it out this way and then have it go over here, see. But anyway, it had what they call a gyro spindle that turned it to set the course of the torpedo after they get the setup on it. The spindles had bent, and they couldn't get the torpedoes back in the tubes. So what we had to do, was we dove, to get the torpedo to move back. Anyway, we tried that several times. We finally got them all back in the tubes.

Like I say, the submarine was a wreck. All the lights went out. When they first started depth charging us, it was complete blackness, you know. The damn submarine was rocking and rolling. And then we had several lines; fuel lines, lube oil lines, and hydraulic lines, rupture. All this stuff, everything that was loose in the bulk heads and overhead, all come flying down. We had two main engines out of commission. And like I say, we had the tubes out of commission. We had to go in. Yes. We went all the way back to Fremantle by Perth. We didn't sink nothing on that patrol.

But this one submarine that was in our wolf pack, once they heard us. They sat and listened to all of this while we was being depth charged. One of them—the one that was outboard of us—got ahead of the convoy, and they finally damaged the tanker. They put some torpedoes in it and damaged it. They were so close into the beach that the Japs beached the tanker on this small island, see.

This one submarine that damaged this tanker, they carried a couple of Australian commandoes, Australian UDT guys. After the Japanese had abandoned it, they sent four or five of the crew with these UDT guys to board the ship to see if anybody was aboard it or not, you know. Anyway, come to find out that they had abandoned the ship. The crew left. They went through it and they, oh, they got a bunch of navigation papers and whatnot. In the pilot house, they found a pair of nylon stockings made in the U.S.A.; no kidding, so help me God. [laughter] I knew the guy that went aboard. Yes. They brought demolition charges with them and they blew the tanker up so it didn't get away.

So the UDT got the credit.

Yes. We got the hell beat out of us and they got all the credit. [laughter]

What did you as a person do during this eighteen hours? Can you eat? Can you do anything? Do you just lay there?

No, just let me explain. Every time they would make a run on us, and drop depth charges, then they can't listen because of all the noises from all the explosions and the water noise. Then we could move around and the cooks would fix sandwiches and make coffee and whatnot. But this time, we couldn't

move anyway, if we wanted to. But other than that, if we was still mobile, where we could still operate under battery and whatnot, we was at battle stations. As soon as we hear them come in, they'd build up speed, and that's when we would start our evasive tactics, because they couldn't hear us, see.

Normally, you tried to move during those periods of times. During this particular mission, you couldn't move at all?

No, we couldn't move.

So you just sat there?

Yes, we just sat there.

Until it got dark and they went away?

Yes, right. During the depth charge explosions, you move about, you do anything you want, you know. Yes. But then as soon as they got quiet again, then you try to be as quiet as a church mouse.

And then you just sit there . . .

Yes.

. . . and read a book.

No. [laughter] Well, yes, if you had a magazine, you could look at it, but everybody is . . .

It's hard to concentrate?

Yes. But I will say this about myself and several of my shipmates, during all of these depth charge attacks . . . like, in the movies where guys crack up and things like that, well, that never happened on any of

the patrol runs that I made. You're all tense and whatnot, but you're always in control of yourself. Like, if you had to do something real quick, you went ahead and you got it done. You wasn't in a state of mind where you couldn't move, you know. Yes. You was in a pretty good frame of mind.

But that must be a little nerve racking?

Oh, well, it is. Then after it's over with, you say, "Oh, that so and so, he really came close on this one, you know." [laughter]

And then you go to Perth?

Yes.

And you get a chance to go ashore and have a good time?

Yes. When we'd come in off of patrol run, we'd get into Fremantle and Perth. Our government had taken over these Australian hotels, and they would put us guys in them for two weeks R&R . . . rest and recuperation. By God, you had to go to sea again to recuperate after them two weeks! [laughter] They just turned us loose. Well, you come in, you'd have a pocket full of money and what are you going to do? You go out and party. [laughter] I mean, some of the guys might have went to these church socials and concerts in the park and the museum and whatnot, but I never did. [laughter]

You went looking for girls and a drink?

That's right. [laughter] I drank, but I was no lush. Oh, I'd get to feeling good and whatnot, but I always was in control of myself. A lot of guys said that I was good natured. I just took things as they came. Yes.

So you stayed in Perth until they fixed your submarine?

Yes. We had to stay an extra week that time, on account of we was beat up so bad. Yes. They had to repair the engines and the main motors was screwed up a little bit. Then all them torpedoes in the torpedo tubes, they had to take them all off, see. They had a job getting them out of the tubes, too, and getting them to the repair shop.

When was that?

It was in March of 1945. Because when we left Subic Bay, it was in the end of February some time and it just took us a short time to get over off the coast of French Indochina. Yes.

And this wolf pack thing, only one submarine was close to the shipping lane?

Yes, right.

The others were spaced at ten miles intervals out to sea?

Yes. That was in case a convoy came that way instead of coming in where we were; they would come ten miles out or twenty miles out.

Each one of you still had a lane?

Oh, yes.

You were still looking at fighting in a lane?

Oh, yes.

If they had destroyed you then, another submarine would have come in on them at another place?

Yes. They would already know that we had sighted something and that they was depth charging us, see. They would head for north of them, to try to get up ahead of them as much as possible.

So when your submarine was repaired, you went back out on patrol?

Yes, we went back up into the same area. We did sight something, but we couldn't close the ring.

Did you go in alone or as a wolf pack?

No, I was only in a wolf pack just that one time.

It didn't turn out very lucky for you?

No. [laughter] Well, like I say, when they'd send these three, four, or five submarines out, you didn't operate together, you weren't in seeing distance. What you would do is, every night, you would maneuver in close and talk over the day's kill or swap movies or spare parts and whatnot. You would communicate. Yes.

How many movies did you take with when you went on patrol?

Well, you would take, oh, about a dozen. You'd see them over and over and over again.

So you'd see them three times before you got through.

Yes. [laughter] Because we didn't have much space for storage of anything. When we go out on a patrol run, we used to get the coffee and the flour in these five gallon tins. They would put the coffee and the flour in the

showers and behind the engines, you know. In the passageways there'd be cases of chow and everything would be all filled up, on the bulk heads and in the over heads. Wherever you could stow anything, we stowed it.

By the end of the patrol, it was all gone?

Yes, we'd have to eat our way through it.

The Black Fin had showers?

We always did have a shower, except on that old S boat. The *Black Fin* and the *Raton*, they had showers, but you couldn't use them.

You still didn't have enough water?

We only carried four thousand gallons of water, see. And they also had to make water for the batteries. The battery water had number one priority. When that water started getting low, before they would make any fresh water for drinking and whatnot, they filled up the battery water tanks.

So on the next patrol, you saw something, but didn't get close enough to do anything?

Yes, we were still in the same area.

Which is generally off the coast of French Indochina?

Yes, French Indochina Toward the last part of the war, we rode the surface a lot, unless you was in course to someplace.

That's because the Japanese didn't have as many airplanes?

Right. Anyway, the radar picked up a convoy. Of course, they didn't know what it

was; they said it was big pips on the radar. We started to close the range. I was up on lookout. And what it was, it was a Japanese task force, I found out later. They had left Singapore and was headed for Japan and on board they had these fifty-five gallon drums all over these cruisers and destroyers and two battleships. What they couldn't stow below, they stowed topside and latched them down. These fifty-five gallon drums was all filled with fuel. We sank so many of their tankers, they didn't have very many of them left. Anyway, when we started to close the range all I could see was the top of the tripod mast, the main mast. And hell, they was going so fast, they just went clear over the horizon. We never could close the range.

They were faster than you were?

Oh, I'll tell you, that would have been a target to get. Because we did have one submarine that sank a battleship all by its lonesome. Yes.

So what did you do on your next patrol?

That was the fourth patrol. Then the last patrol, we went back to Pearl Harbor. We stayed at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel for two weeks. Not many girls there, you know, and nothing you can do. But anyway, we went out on the next patrol. We stopped in Saipan again. We topped off on fuel and then we went towards the Yellow Sea, just up off the coast of Shanghai into some more shallow water. And that's where we were. When we was in Pearl, it was the end of June, I guess, and then July came around. We had just got up on stations when they dropped the first atomic bomb.

What did you guys hear about that?

The Navy had what we would call "fox gets." They would send out all this stuff over this fox head, whether it be messages that had to be coded, or the ball scores and evening news, and, like, if something happens in some city or something. While we was surfaced that night, that's when we found out that they had dropped the bomb . . . the first one. Then they dropped the second one. Then they told us that the war was over.

What did you think?

Oh, mighty fine. The first thing I said, I was wishing they had dropped it three years, nine months earlier. Then they wouldn't have chased my ass all over that South Pacific. [laughter]

After the war, you went on one of your more dangerous missions.

Well, that's where we were when the war ended, see. Now, the war ended, you know, the 15 or 14 of August, see, and we're still on patrol! They told us that we had to stay right there because there was so many fanatic Japanese that weren't giving up. They wanted to make sure that everything was still all right. They kept us out there for another two and a half to three weeks. That's when we blew up all these mines. One day we blew up nineteen of them. Like I say, they either didn't know how to lay a mine field or they cut them loose. I don't think they cut them loose because some of them had barnacles on them. They had barnacles under barnacles, you know.

This was the mines in the shipping lanes going into Japan? You had to try to destroy as many as you could?

Yes.

You shot them with your depth gun, is that what you did?

We used our depth gun. We used our 40 millimeter, 20 millimeter, and a rifle. The diver hit them with the rifle and they was just duds, you know. A couple of them, we blew the top of them right off and they didn't blow up. They all didn't blow up, but I would say over fifty of them did blow up, yes.

This is just a big target practice?

Oh, yes.

But if you don't see them and get them first, they get you?

That's right. And here we are riding around; the war's over and we're riding around in this mine field. We got these messages through the fox catch. These girls in San Francisco, oh, they were so happy, they was taking off their clothes and jumping in these fountains. And here we are, you know . . . [laughter]

You wanted to get back there to jump in the fountains with the girls.

Yes, that's right. [laughter]

Well, our last patrol run when we was on our way up to the Yellow Sea, we ran into some Chinese fishing boats. We pulled up alongside them, and of course, they was scared shitless of us. They didn't know what the hell we was going to do. But anyway, there was one guy on one of them, well, he could speak two or three words of English. We gave them cigarettes and clothes and food, and we went on our way and they went their way, yes. This was while we was still fighting the Japs.

Where did you go after that?

We went back to Guam and stayed two or three days. We got back to San Diego September 30. It took us a long time to get back. We ran into a typhoon right at the end of the war there. The typhoon was such a force, it took the bow off of the *Pittsburgh*, one of our cruisers.

When you came back, you came back in a convoy?

No, all by ourselves. We was always by ourselves. You know, during the whole war we're waiting around.

You and ninety-five other guys in a little metal box.

And you know, all during World War II, I never did see a Japanese. Yes. The only time I saw a Japanese soldier was in the island of Truk after the war when we went in there. I know a few times, when we had surfaced after we sank a few ships, there'd be life boats out there and whatnot and all kinds of boxes and bamboo things that they stored stuff in. Everything was made out of bamboo. They're floating around out there. Nobody was ever in the life boats, you know. For target practice, we'd shoot at them.

You knew you were going to stay in the Navy?

Oh, yes.

And you reenlisted?

In fact, I reenlisted for two years while the war was still on because my first enlistment was only what they called a kiddie cruise, a minority enlistment.

You were under eighteen then.

Yes. So while I was on the submarine, I reenlisted for two years.

The guys said to me, "What the hell? What's the matter with you? You crazy? What are you doing shipping over?"

I said, "What in the hell? You're going to be right out there getting your ass shot off like me. I might as well get that reenlistment money, and go spend it." [laughter] So I reenlisted there, then I reenlisted later on. Yes.

And you stayed twenty years exactly.

Yes. Well, nineteen years, six months is what it was.

You were always in the submarine service?

Yes. Well, I was on recruiting duty my last tour of duty.

That was in Southern California?

It was in Sacramento.

You said that during that time, you had a brother-in-law who lived in Fallon.

Yes.

And you came to visit.

Yes.

And that's how you happened to move to Nevada and open Bob's Rootbeer?

Yes. I think I've done well. I mean, I never went on welfare or anything like that or drew food stamps. I earned enough money where me and my wife, we'd go on these trips

overseas, around the world, and whatnot close to three or four months every year.

Doesn't sound to me like you were ready to settle and get married very soon, though, during the war.

Well, I didn't. I didn't get married until I had almost twelve years in the Navy. I was almost twenty-nine.

That was a good single man's life.

Oh, yes. I thought so. [laughter] I never had any worries, you know.

How did you settle down long enough and stay in port long enough to marry somebody? How did that happen?

Well, I told my wife I'm going to do twenty years. I met her in Sacramento and I told her, "Well, I'm going to do twenty years in the Navy. Now, I don't want no crap from you saying that I got to go to sea or to Japan for six months or anything like that. You can get me held after I get my twenty years in, but not now."

So she said, "OK."

On these other submarines that I was on, I'd go on these extended trips, you know. Like I say, it was only for eight more years [after I was married]. Yes.

It pretty much was the same kind of stuff. Submarine warfare was still the same long, lonely patrol kind of work?

Yes. Well, from 1946 on up, we always had a submarine off the coast of Russia. You go up there between thirty to forty days, and stay submerged all day just watching those Russian ships going in and coming out of port, what kind of planes flew overhead, and take

water soundings. Up there off of Alaska, they had what they called the Big Diomedes and the Little Diomedes Islands. We owned one and they owned the other. Well, it's a secret base for the Russians. We have kept our eye on them ever since the cold war. Even though there was no shooting during the cold war, there was a lot of patrol runs.

From the time you first went in, all your sea duty was pretty much the same stuff.

Yes. You went to sea and you trained. And well, I forgot to mention it, but every time we'd come in off a patrol run, a third of the crew would get transferred. And then we'd take aboard one third new people, see.

Why did they do that?

Well, for training. They'd send guys back for new construction, where they put these new submarines in commission. It was kind of a round robin thing. Yes.

With most everybody, I wonder how they dealt with the change from the excitement and the tension of war time and the spirit of camaraderie to civilian life. But you didn't get out.

No. I just stayed right in. The guys that I was shipmates with, a lot of them went and done the same thing I did. We just took it all with a grain of salt. I really liked the Navy, you know. Some guys oh, they couldn't wait to get out, but not me. Like I say, I found a home.

Rank doesn't seem to have been important to you.

No. I liked what I was doing. Yes. They'd say, "Well, how come you stayed in the

goddamn Navy so long and you only made chief petty officer and blah-blah-blah." A lot of them went to warrant and ensign and lieutenant and retired lieutenant commander and commander. And they'd say, "You didn't do nothing!"

"Well," I said, "it didn't bother me. I might have wore a white hat all those years, but that didn't stop me from becoming a millionaire." [laughter] That's what I tell them.

Because a lot of these guys that say this to me, they were the ones that made rank, you know. And well, when I'd be talking with them at these conventions and reunions and whatnot, and we'd start talking about old times and all these guys that made rank, they were always talking about, "Well, my boys done this and my boys done that, and I was in charge of this."

I said, "Come on now, what are you talking about . . . my this, my that, and sir this, and sir that? You used to go to all them gin mills on the corner of Third and Mission Street and went with them same gals we did and got drunk with them and whatnot. How come you're so highfalutin now." Boy, they'd look at me. They liked to forget all that, you know. Of course, I'd remind them. I was just ripping them, you know. My twenty years in the Navy, I enjoyed it. I didn't mind going to sea. Yes.

When you joined at seventeen, you didn't have much of a future.

No.

There wasn't any place for you to go.

No.

You had no career. You weren't going to college.

No. The town I come from, it's all full of factories, or it was; the brass center of the world, you know. They made machines that make machines. I had told my wife and she always reminds me of it, that I joined the Navy because I didn't want to go be cooped up in one of those factories. And I wound up on a submarine for twenty years. I said, "I don't want to be locked up for twenty years. I mean, working in a factory." [laughter]

It's a different kind of factory, though.

Oh, yes. Well, you had your engineers and you had your torpedo man and radio man, and quarter master and sonar man. And me being the gunner's mate, I was in amongst them all and I got along with everybody. Yes.

When did you join the Association of Former Submariners?

In 1966 or 1967—I forget. It started in 1957, I think it was.

You said one of the five S's from S13 is coming to visit you next week.

Yes. We're having a submarine veterans of World War II convention in Salt Lake City over Labor Day weekend. We're having an S13 and we're having a *Black Fin* reunion there at the same time. He's coming to the reunion and the convention, then he's going to come down here to Fallon, see.

Any of the other guys from the original crew still around?

Oh, yes. See, I'm running the reunion. And well, this year, they got it a little screwed up, they got too many things going on at

the same time, right around the Labor Day weekend. Like they got the submarine veterans of World War II convention in Salt Lake City. Then they got a big affair going on out there in Pearl Harbor about the same thing. Then in New London, Connecticut, they're building a wall of honor. All the guys that went down in the submarines, they got their names on this wall. And they're dedicating that over Labor Day weekend. And then they got some reunions going on in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. See, all the coordinators, they didn't get together and they got all their dates all at the same time. It's a shame. I would have liked to go out to Pearl Harbor, and New London, Connecticut, but I can't go to all of them. So anyway, my old shipmate, he'll be here. Yes, he used to call me a goddamn Dago and I'd go, you goddamn Jew. I said, "Old Hitler will get you." [laughter]

That's kind of the way everybody talked about each other?

Yes?

They had some kind of an ethnic name for everybody?

Oh, yes. Nobody got pissed off. I mean, nobody got mad at one another, you know, as long as you said it in a friendly way. Yes. [laughter] You call a French man a frog, or a Lithuanian a pollack, or you name it. [laughter]

Is there anything else about the war? Any other thing that you didn't tell?

Oh, there's only one other thing. It doesn't have nothing to do with the war. We surfaced in the Java Sea one night. We was submerged

all day and then we surfaced. Here comes this whole flock of what looked like starlings, you know. They was all over that submarine. They flew down the hatch and everything. Yes. Had a hell of a time getting rid of them.

Which submarine were you on then?

I was on the *Black Fin*.

STEPHEN V. TIEBER

Ken Adams: Would you give me your name and tell me where you were born, when you were born, a little bit about your family and what your father did, and your background.

Stephen V. Tieber: OK. My name is Stephen Tieber. I'm 74 years of age. I was born in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania. I have three other brothers . . . or had three other brothers. They all have died and are deceased.

My father was a refrigeration engineer, and during Prohibition he worked in a huge ice plant back in Carnegie, Pennsylvania. And of course, when Prohibition was over, why, he worked variously maintaining refrigeration equipment and things like this. My parents were both from Austria. My dad was in the Austrian Army. When WWI came along, why, fortunately, he and my mother were on the last ship out of Hamburg to leave Europe and they got away. Otherwise he would have been in WWI in the German Cavalry, or Austrian Cavalry, I guess.

Had he received his refrigeration training in Austria? Did he come over here with a trade?

Yes, he did. It wasn't what we would call, probably, a formal engineering training that he received.

Your parents were already married?

They were married.

Did they have any children yet?

They had my oldest brother, Julius. My father's name was Julius; my mother's name was Rose. My oldest brother, I believe he was six years old when they went back to Europe for a visit. This was when the Americans were about to become involved in WWI. This was when they, fortunately, got out. Otherwise, because my father was still a citizen of Austria, he had no choice in leaving.

How did they get to Pennsylvania, do you know?

They landed, of course, in New York. Most of the immigrants from Europe spent time in



LEFT TO RIGHT: CAPT. STEPHEN V. TIEBER, AN ASPIRING STARLET (NAME UNKNOWN), AND CAPT. LEONARD ADLER. LAS VEGAS LAST FRONTIER HOTEL IN BACKGROUND, 1945.

New York, because most of them had people there that they knew that had come over earlier. I really don't know how they migrated to the Pittsburgh area, but they did.

You were born in 1921?

I was born in 1921, right.

They had already been here three years. Did you grow up speaking German at home?

I knew a little German, but not very much. We spoke English at home. My father was well-versed in English. And how that came about . . . unfortunately, I know so little about their background, and knew not too many people that were friends or relatives of theirs. I remember one cousin from back there, and one uncle; uncle Frank we called him. That's all I knew about them.

There was never much discussion about their home life. I think in Austria they lived in a farming community and each person . . . Of course, we've been to Europe since then, my wife and I. Like in Holland, you lived in a small village, and outside the village were plots of land. You had your own plot of land that you farmed and raised food, and so forth. What my father actually did for a living in Austria, I don't know. I really don't know.

So you went to school in . . . ?

I went to school in McKees Rocks. I went to a Catholic grade school and high school, and graduated in 1938. The problems with Japan came along, and we declared war. In August of 1942 I went down and enlisted to try to become an aviation cadet. Fortunately, I passed all the . . .

Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

Yes, I was home. I think this was a Sunday morning, wasn't it? Yes. We lived in a little community which was a suburb of Pittsburgh. It was all open fields with a few houses; a little village; the first place I remember. Where I was born, actually. I was born in McKees Rocks, but we lived in this community of about thirty or forty homes. My best friend lived down across the field from me, maybe a hundred, two hundred yards. First thing I did, is I ran out of the house and I ran down to Bill Moore's place and ran in there and I said, "Bill, we've got to go down and enlist."

He was serious, as I was, you know. He went down a few days later and he tried to get into the Aviation Cadet program. In one of the phases, why, he didn't make it . . . whether it was physical or whatever . . . so he enlisted in the Marine Corps. I thought it over for approximately a month or so, and finally I *did* go. I'm not too sure of the actual date that I went down, but I went into Pittsburgh, which is where we had to go, where the recruiting offices were. The first thing they gave you was all this testing, coordination and all these things. I passed those and then probably two months later, I got a letter from them to come in for a physical, which I did.

You were twenty, and by the time you went in, you were twenty-one. What had you done after you got out of high school?

When I first got out of high school, I went to work for Federal Enamel and Stamping Company. You know, no jobs were available. Some of my friends went to work in steel mills, and they were paying five dollars a day. That was a good job, if you could get a

job in one of the steel mills for five dollars a day, twenty-five dollars a week. Well, I went to work for Federal Enamel and Stamping. Some of our neighbors worked there, and one fellow was kind of a foreman and he got me a job there. I started off at, I think it was, thirty-two cents an hour down there working at Federal Enamel. It was a terrible job. I was helping on a drill press that pressed out the metal forks. And, you know, there were people there with fingers cut off and it was terrible. They had a horrible union; they had something of a steel workers union which you paid dues for, but the union was part of the management. So I worked there for probably eight months, something like that.

One day, why, I was up in my bedroom and my dad came home and he called up to me and he said, "I got you a job out at the brewery out in Duquesne, someplace like that, on the south side of town."

I said, "Gee, that's great." I think it started about thirty dollars a day or something like that for that job.

Thirty dollars a week?

Thirty dollars a week, yes. I worked there until I went into the service. When I came home on leave I went back and visited old friends and things like that, that worked there. The brewmaster's name was Irvin Eaddinger. They were all German instructors.

The brewmaster said, "Make sure that when you get out of the service you come back. We're going to send you to the Brewmaster School up in Chicago."

Whether you ever became a brewmaster or not, the head honcho in any brewery operation was the brewmaster. But you could become a brewer or something like this, which was a pretty cushy job, too.

Not only do you come from an Austrian background, but you're working in a German-Austrian kind of environment.

In a German community

There's a war in Europe and Germany's very heavily involved. I would think there were some mixed feelings. Had your parents clearly separated themselves? There had to be some people who thought, if the United States goes to war, we're going to be fighting our relatives.

No. This is one thing that I will say, that never once did I ever hear my father make any derogatory remark about the U.S. fighting the Germans, and things like this . . . never. I guess he wiped it out of his mind. I know a lot of our friends, or his friends, did. You know, they weren't condemning the United States and saying the Germans were God's gift to mankind and things like this.

Well, even without that, you have to say, "I've got relatives over there, and if we go to war . . .

That's right.

. . . we're going to be killing our own relatives." I mean, there had to have been some mixed feelings.

I had some concerns with my name and everything, that if I were shot down over there or captured or something like this I mean, we knew from experience, [if you were captured by] the regular German army, why, you were all right. You were taken care of if you were imprisoned and things like this. But if you got involved in the SS, they'd just as soon kill you. They didn't want to take any prisoners and things like this. And this was a concern.

Did you speak German?

I knew a little German because my parents spoke German. Between mother and father, they spoke German quite a bit, and when they had friends over or they visited with other friends. We would go as kids; they took us everywhere. If they went out for the evening, we went with them. They'd go up the hill to Franco's and play cards and things like this, you know. But never, when they were around us, did my parents speak German. They spoke English all the time. My father was quite fluent in English. He had an interesting, very interesting, life.

Then you took the physical. And first you took the basic tests to

The medical tests

Both you and your friend wanted to be flyers?

Yes.

Why did you want to be flyers?

Oh, it was a glory thing, I guess. I could see myself in the P-40 or something, just charging the Japanese. I hated the Japanese, of course. I didn't care much for the Germans, either. I had no love for Germans.

Did you separate the Germans in your mind from the guys you worked with at the plant, in the brewery?

Well, I never really got into a discussion with any of the people I worked with in the brewery or things like this. A lot of them were my age, too. There were a lot of radical people. Those people could have formed a

Probably did . . .

And sabotage, and everything else involved . . .

Yes, they probably formed some sort of an organization, some of them at least.

To this day, I hate the Germans for what they did. And of course, I hate the Japanese more. I have no sympathy about the bombing of Nagasaki or Hiroshima at all. I mean, what they did to us, and what they did to prisoners . . . Bataan, all this sort of thing. I have no love for them. I don't today. I don't feel a bit guilty about destroying all those people. I really don't. And I felt the same way about the Germans.

Being green at war and things like this, the first flight I took, I had an experienced pilot and crew fly with me. I don't know which target we went to or anything like that. But the second flight, we had three choices. We had the primary target and we had a secondary target. If you couldn't hit the primary for some reason, then you had a secondary target. The last was the target of opportunity. The target of opportunity had to be in Germany or against German troops or something like that. You couldn't pick a target of opportunity in Holland, or Belgium, or France, or whatever. On this second mission, why, for some reason they couldn't get the primary target—green, you know. This is a new world you're in now. It came to you all of a sudden, just a big shock, "Here I'm in a war!" They dropped on a small crossroads town someplace in Germany. And you know, I felt awful about that. I still do. I think about that. It bothered me. But other than that, anything in Germany was fair game—believe me.

In August of 1942 you went in?

No, I enlisted then but I didn't go in. They didn't call me until the first part of January in 1943. That is when I actually got a letter in the mail, to meet at the train station in Pittsburgh. There must have been twelve hundred of us there waiting to get on the train.

They shipped us down to Nashville, Tennessee. Then we spent two weeks, testing. This is where they determined what you were going to be. You had all kinds of meetings with psychologists and things like this. They were quite thorough, you know. You spent time holding a probe in your hand, and here's like a turntable on a record player with a dot in the middle. You had to keep the probe on that thing as it went around and things like this. They'd reverse it and all this stuff. You'd go bleary-eyed after a while. But then finally, why, they would post a notice, big typewritten lists of who was what—pilot, bombardier, and navigator, this type of thing—up on the Administration Building. My name was on the pilot list. I just jumped up and down when I saw that.

Most of those men had college degrees or at least . . .

A lot of them did. Yes, there were some college . . .

It was rare for someone without it to . . .

In the beginning it was, but if you made the test later on, like in 1943, 1944, something like this, why you had a good opportunity to get into the training program.

That was in the first part of 1943, and I was sent down to Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama. It was a beautiful base, all permanent brick buildings, you know. This was pre-flight training, ground school and quite a bit of physical training. And this was tough . . . this was really tough. They told us that the hazing

was terrible there. The upperclassman would sit across the table from you and make you eat a square meal; you had to break your bread in so many perfect pieces, and things like this.

By a square meal, meaning you had to lift your fork . . .

You couldn't look; you had to cut your food without looking and then you lifted it. Everybody had an upperclassman sitting directly across from them. You picked up your food . . .

You lift your fork straight up at a 90-degree angle?

Yes, that's right . . . square. And of course, we survived all of that.

Were they physically abusive, too? Did they kind of hit you, or just yell at you?

No, no hitting, but they belittled you if they thought you did something wrong, whether it was wrong or not. Why, they'd have you down there on your hands and knees straightening up imaginary grass, you know. You'd have to get down and pick up this blade of grass and lift the grass up three feet. You were on your hands and knees. You raised each blade of grass. "Keep that up!" There were things like that.

The concept, supposedly, in all these things is, they break all your previous associations, they reduce you to where you don't have any values of your own, and then they make you aspire to these new values.

That's right.

Is it important? Does it work? Or is it just a lot of ego stuff for them?

Well . . .

Because, somewhere or other, you were an upperclassman later.

That's right. I hate to say it but I rather enjoyed it. I liked the discipline. I really liked the discipline. When I became an upperclassman, why, I became a cadet sergeant, which was a pretty good rank. I marched behind the troops and kept them in line and things like this. I kind of enjoyed that.

Anyway, I managed to get through all of that and then I went to Clarksdale, Mississippi, which was a primary training school. We had a few military people there, not very many. The commanding officer was a captain. It was a contract school run by civilians. All the instructors were civilians.

My instructor, Waddy Jones was his name, was a real great guy; I remember him. He and I got along real well. We were flying PT-17 biplanes. My plane was a beautiful airplane, great for acrobatics and things like this. Waddy was a handsome guy; blond, you know. God, he was a movie star if there ever was one. He had a girlfriend that lived on a farm outside of town. So we would take off.

He'd say, "We're flying tomorrow morning, Sunday morning."

Well, we flew seven days a week. There was no Sunday, or holidays or anything like that, see, in all of the training. So we'd take off and fly out there, and he'd land in this pasture. I'd have to stay in the airplane and he'd go in. I don't know what he did, maybe have breakfast. But he visited for probably an hour, you know. He'd come out and crank her up, "Take her off. Let's go." So that was kind of interesting.

The training was a half a day of some sort of physical activity and classroom stuff, and then the second half of the day was . . .

Fortunately, I got the morning flight; my preference was the morning flight. It was a little bit cooler. It was terribly hot down there.

Was there a lot of swimming involved in the physical training?

Swimming?

Was that conscious on their part because they thought you could end up in the water and they wanted to make sure you were all good swimmers?

I have no idea. It was pretty rugged physical training, a lot of calisthenics. The morning calisthenics, we did that first thing, before we flew or anything else. We did all kinds of games, target practice with .22 rifles, and things like this. And of course, all the afternoons . . .

Did you do skeet shooting?

Later on . . . not then . . . We just used .22 rifles, shooting at targets. At any rate, that was two months of primary training, and I graduated from that.

It was a small town, Clarksdale. People were very biased about black people. A lot of black people worked on the base. They had these teams, a kid and a man—maybe it was his father—that would pull the props. They had a long shock cord with a leather boot on it. They'd turn the prop to a certain position, and put this boot on the top. They would turn this thing to turn the engine over; cranked them by hand, so to speak. A

lot of times this big old leather boot come and slapped them in the head, and things like this, you know.

But the people in town were very nice to us. On Saturday afternoon, if you had the afternoon off, why a farmer would come in with a great big flatbed trailer with benches bolted on it. We'd stand outside the gate, and he'd come around and pick up thirty, forty kids, and take them into town. People there were great with us.

Sunday morning, if I had the opportunity, I would go in and go to church. These people would wait in their big cars, these old Cadillacs and Lincoln's and things like this, outside of the church, and the gentlemen would step out, "Soldier, would you like to come with us and have breakfast?" They'd take you to their home, or take you to a restaurant, and then they'd drive around, you know, take you around and show you the sights, and things like this.

I remember one family, very nice people, another friend of mine and I got in with them. They drove around, and there was a new building going up, and I said, "Gee, what is that?"

"Well, they're building a damn school for the niggers, if you can imagine," he told me. Well, I lost respect for those people right there. That's the way it was in the South, you know. I spent all my time in the South, or southeast.

At any rate, I survived primary. I went to Newport, Arkansas to basic, flying BT-13's. I did fairly well. This instructor I had was a young second lieutenant and we never hit it off. About halfway through the program, why, he was going to wash me out. On my forced landings, he didn't like what I chose for a landing spot and things like this. Well, Newport, Arkansas, was mostly rice fields, and

then a lot of dense forests. The rice paddies had all of these dikes in them. What he'd do, is he'd take you up, you'd get up around five thousand feet, and he'd chop the engine. "OK, take her down. Find a place to land." Well, I never picked this spot that he thought was the best spot to land in. He gave me two check rides. The third check ride, why, you washed out. Well, the third check ride, he didn't give you that, someone else gave you that. This captain was our squadron commander, so he took me up for the third check ride. So we went up, flying around and everything else, and chopped the throttle. I headed for these trees . . . my usual spot. I was going to set her down in the top of these trees; I wasn't going to go in the rice paddy.

He said, "Why did you do that?"

I said, "Well, because I felt that I could survive that. I couldn't survive hitting one of those dikes down there." It was a fixed gear airplane, the wheels were down all the time. If you hit that water and the muck, you're going to cartwheel head over heels.

He said, "I agree with you."

Then he became our instructor, this squadron commander. Toward graduation time . . .

They had a system for recognizing your personality conflicts, and making sure the personalities didn't get in the way?

Right. So toward graduation time, well, they had this field day, and he entered me in the forced landing contest. In primary, we had grass fields. In basic, we had blacktop runways. They set a plane right on the edge of the runway. You flew around at three thousand feet and then they would call your number. Wherever you were, you chopped your throttle, and you had to do the configurations proper to come in there. The

closest one to landing in front of that plane, why that was it. They did that three times. And by luck, or whatever it was, each time I put my wheels down right in front of that target plane. I won the forced landing contest. I got a certificate at home and all this stuff.

This second lieutenant, my first instructor, he was married. We were all standing in line at the theater that night, and he was right in front of us with his wife. My friends, they knew the whole story about this thing. They started in, in kind of a loud voice, "Boy, Steve, boy, you sure cooled that group today, didn't you?" and all this sort of stuff. This guy was embarrassed as hell. And, not to gloat, but right when I was leaving our base in England to come home, who should come over as a co-pilot on a B-24 but this instructor of mine. He still a second lieutenant; I was a captain.

Which means that somewhere in there, he still hadn't mastered something.

He had problems; he really did. *Why* he was an instructor, I'll never know.

Anyway, I finished basic training and then I went to Stuttgart, Arkansas, for two months of advanced training in a twin-engine. They had determined, apparently back in Nashville, my profile of what they wanted me to be. You had choices. I asked for a twin-engine airplane, whatever it would be; P-38, B-25, anything. Well, I guess they decided, with my mentality and the way I handled things, that I'd be a poor engine pilot so I went to advance twin-engine. It was practically a canvas and wood frame airplane. You had to get up on the wing and the pilot and the co-pilot got in there. There was no cabin part or anything behind the thing. It was a nice airplane.

Stuttgart, Arkansas, was the duck capital of the world. You never saw so many . . . they'd get up by the millions in the morning.

We had a lot of accidents hitting ducks. They were in your formation and things like this. I had one hit the windscreen, but it never did any damage.

I completed that, then went down to Barksdale, Louisiana, for high altitude training. They put you in this high-altitude chamber with no oxygen mask or anything else. They'd take you up to thirty thousand feet or something like this, and you'd pass out. They'd drop you back down again and slap on oxygen. They had an instructor in there with you, or someone helping you. That's where we graduated from pilot training, and got our wings. Some of us became second lieutenants and some became flight officers that didn't make commission grade. I don't know how they picked them. At any rate . . .

How many months had the pilot training lasted?

Well, it was two months at each phase. It was two months in pre-flight, two months in primary . . . I enlisted August 31, 1942, went in, and graduated on December 4, 1943. This is a kind of chronology of what happened. There were two months in each phase of the program. Then they give us two weeks off after graduation. I went home.

I was transferred to Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama, where I'd taken my pre-flight, but now it was B-24 transition school. I spent, I believe, two months there in training. I took a lot of cross-country trips, and went up to West Point a couple of times. My instructor lived in Long Island so we got to visit New York quite frequently. Particularly in the wintertime up there, there's a lot of snow. We'd go in and spend three or four days in a hotel in New York City. He'd have about eight students and we'd all go together, and each

take turns flying the aircraft and so forth. After B-24 transition, that was the end of my flight training.

Some point in here, you were introduced to your future wife?

After I finished transition training, I went home for a short leave. My friend, Bill Moore, who was in the Marine Corps, was home at the same time. He was going out to the old airport at Pittsburgh, and he said, "Come on along." So I went out there and my wife was the reservations agent with Pennsylvania Central Airlines.

Her name was B.J., Betty Jane O'Donnel. I met her, and said, "Well, let's go out someplace." We went on a date that night. She was a nice girl. I did think a heck of a lot of her at the time. I think we had one more date before I had to leave.

Bill had to leave, too. He was a gunnery man, I don't know what his enlisted rank was, on a light ship. They had gone over to Africa, lining up landing craft and things like this out there. He ended up down in the South Pacific. What he did there, I never really did know.

But anyway, this is where I met B.J. O'Donnel, and things kind of clicked a little bit, you know.

So, at any rate, then I was sent to Westover, Massachusetts, the air base up there near Boston. This is where I picked up my crew. You had no idea what you're getting and you go into this big room, "Lt. Stephen Tieber, stand over here." They start calling out names: co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, three gunners; ten people altogether. The flight engineer was older than all of us. He was about twenty-eight or twenty-nine years of age. Then for some reason, before we left, they made a change and they took away my radio operator, who was just out of radio

school, and they gave me the instructor in radio school.

This was the first crew. This was in January or so of 1944?

Yes, that's about when it would be.

Essentially, you kept that crew intact.

Most of the time, yes, but there were some changes later on. At any rate, I picked up the crew. We spent quite a bit of time up at Westover near Holyoke and Springfield, Massachusetts—Holyoke was a small town near there—in training with the crew, practicing a lot of night bombing, daytime bombing, and things like this. They had bombing ranges out there. We dropped hundred pound little bombs. We weren't too great, to my knowledge . . . I mean, nothing spectacular that I knew about at the time, as far as results.

The navigator, Gene Snyder, I really wasn't too happy with him. The co-pilot was from that part of the country. He was a big Irishman, a big, blonde-haired guy. He was a ladies man, you know. At any rate, we trained there.

The engineer kind of surprised me. He had had a lot of experience. We took off this one night, and right on take-off he yelled, "Number two engine is on fire." I immediately shut down the engine, feathered the prop, things like this. He said, "It looks like it's out."

I didn't pull the fire extinguisher, which really screws things up, as far as the engine goes, when you flood them with this foam inside the engine. At any rate, we pulled on out of there, called in MAYDAY for all the emergency vehicles and things like this, came in and landed, and taxied over [to the emergency vehicles]. All the maintenance

officers and operations officers and everybody else came out. There was nothing wrong with the engine. They started it up again. This engineer had looked out, from the waist of the airplane when he was back there checking things out. He saw this flame, this torch coming out of the engine. I couldn't see that. I can't see that far from where I'm sitting. They thought I was pretty good to feather an engine on take-off, go around and make a successful landing. I felt pretty good about it, too. At any rate, we finished our training there. We got a little better all the time.

They shipped us down to Mitchell Field in Long Island. This is where we picked up a new airplane, a new B-24. We trained there for some time.

I got to meet Leroy Wile's family, the bombardier's. He was a cut-up. We all went into Brooklyn one night and had dinner with his family. They owned delicatessens all over Brooklyn, and they owned I don't know how many big, high-rise apartment complexes. Well, I didn't drink and I didn't smoke. His mother, she just hung on me. "Leroy is so lucky. You don't drink. Oh, he's going to be . . . , "you know, she did the big mama type thing. At any rate, we went through all of that. I enjoyed the family. He had a girlfriend that was there, and she later on sent us gifts overseas, like the big quart jar of maraschino cherries; she dumped all the juice out and filled the rest with brandy. I didn't care for it, but most other people enjoyed it. It was a great treat for them.

We took off from there in a huge mass of planes flying five hundred feet on top of the clouds. We headed up to Dow Field in Bangor, Maine, and spent a couple of days there. We made out our wills and power of attorney. The Red Cross gave you a little ditty bag, with razors and all this stuff. I knew it was getting real at this point. I figured, when I first got in,

this war will never last and I'm not going to get into combat or anything like that, you know.

How did you feel about that? Had you gotten over the eagerness that you felt the day you ran down the road and said, "Let's go to war!"

No, I was still eager. I think the whole crew was, except Leroy. Leroy, he'd rather stay back at Mitchell Field. At any rate, then we left Dow Field in Bangor and we flew up to Goose Bay, Labrador; quite a trek. I couldn't believe the estuary at the St. Lawrence River. I swear it took almost an hour to fly across this thing. We landed at Goose Bay. The Canadians, the RCAF, had the opposite portion of the field. The U.S. had this side and it was a staging area. They got us all there. They go through, check to make sure that everything is filled out right; notification of the next of kin and your will. You get a lot of different clothing, a different type of flight jacket, and things like this. I think we were there almost two weeks.

We took a lot of hikes. There was just a huge, roaring river coming down there. There was an Indian village there on this river, and we would hike down there and look these people over and things. You could smell this Indian village two miles away; but interesting country.

Then came time to leave. We left at night. Our ballast in this airplane was case after case after case of toilet paper. Every airplane that went over carried supplies, and we were carrying toilet paper.

How many planes were with you?

In our group, leaving, there was probably twenty or twenty-four B-24s. B-24 was the airplane that was being mass produced then. They built more B-24s than any other aircraft for World War II. Willow Run and

different plants up in Michigan produced over seventeen thousand B-24s.

There isn't one left today, flying. They're trying to find one for the air museum in England. They've got the nose section of one, that's it. They're all gone. One came through Reno last year, or the year before last, and I got the family, my grandkids and so forth, to take a look at that.

At any rate, we took off. The gunners are all gung-ho. The bombardier, he handled the nose turret, the engineer had the top turret, and then you had gunners in the waist and the tail turret. They took the canvas covers off all the .50 caliber guns and one of the officers came out there and said, "What the *hell* are you doing?"

The gunner said, "Well, you know, we might run into Germans somewhere between here and Ireland!" [laughter]

They had to put all this stuff back on again. The officer said, "You leave that stuff on. This isn't your airplane. You're just delivering it," which was true.

We took off at eleven, twelve o'clock at night, I guess. We were supposed to land in Greenland, but we couldn't get into Greenland, so we had to go direct to Ireland. Well, about halfway across, why, all of our radio equipment went out. We were flying in between layers of clouds. We couldn't see the ocean, couldn't see the stars or the moon, or anything like that. The navigator was useless . . . until later on.

This radio operator, he gets back there on the flight deck where the radio [is located]. I looked back at one time. He had parts and tubes—it was an old type radio—spread all over the floor. Everything was apart; little transistors, relays, and wiring. Finally, after about three hours, he got that thing all put together. It was working. Finally, the radio compass came on. Fortunately

for us, there was a bearing across Ireland. Ahead of Donegal Bay they had a beacon that reached a thousand miles out to sea. We picked that up on the radio compass. That old needle swung up there, and we were making a huge arc. We were heading for North Africa. We didn't know where we were. Finally, we picked up this signal. We took the B-24 on in.

In the meantime, I developed a very bad gas leak. The main gas tanks were in the wings and above the bomb bay. This stuff was just pouring down. They couldn't do anything with it, so the first airfield I saw—of course, the weather had cleared up pretty good by this time—I just came in and landed.

It happened to be an auxiliary field. There were two American officers there, for what reason I don't know. We were with some RAF people. We spent two days there while I repaired the airplane. These officers took us into town, which was not allowed. We had to go through customs, so to speak, when we got over there. We were suppose to do this at our assigned base. We went into town, right close to Belfast. We met the local people and this sort of thing. We're standing there at the bar, all of my crew was there, and this Irishman says, "Did you see the light when you come in?"

I said, "What's that?"

"Did you see the light?"

I said, "No, we came in, in the daytime."

"No, you dumb ass," he says, "I mean the Lake." Lough Neagh was there, you know. I couldn't understand him.

We finally got the airplane repaired. The RAF came out with a jeep and a tank—maybe 500 gallons—and with a hand pump. I swear it took them an hour and a half to put gas in that B-24. We took off and went to the base, where we unloaded all our toilet paper and things like this.

Every place you went, there were new rules of operation. Forget about what they told you over there, this is the way we do it over here. Now you don't do this, and you don't do that, and things like this. So we went through all this sort of thing, and sort of enjoyed it.

We walked down to Lough Nye and watched these fisherman catching these eels. They had big wood crates full of eels. It was very interesting. It rained practically all the time, just a mist, you know.

We took off from there. They took us all in the back end of a B-17. We went over across the Irish Sea and went to Stoke-on-Trent in England. Here we went through the same thing again. I mean, more indoctrination. What they told you in Ireland, forget about it, you know, this sort of thing. A week in Stoke-on-Trent, and back to Ireland again, to the air base over there. I really don't remember what that phase of it was for. But anyway, after maybe four or five days, they loaded us in the back end of another airplane and flew us, the 445th Bomb Group, to our base up in East Anglia, the big bubble that sticks out into the North Sea. The little town of Thetford, about eighteen miles from Norwich, is where we ended up. No more training and things like that. I mean, you were here; you're ready to go.

I think two days later, why, we took off and went to some target in Germany. I don't know what it was.

What month was it that you finally arrived at your base?

This had to be in April of 1944.

Then we started flying. About our sixth or seventh mission, I forget which one it was, why, they made us the lead crew. It was fine. The only unfortunate thing about that was that we had to fly almost *every* day, not on missions, but we had practices. We had to

fly at least three times, checking equipment on the airplane, before we went on an action mission. We put in a lot of time. Not all the crew flew; the engineer, the bombardier, navigator, co-pilot, and myself flew.

Then they gave me new people. After a bit, I got rid of Lyle, they made him an observer, a Warrant Officer. Don Myers was the new mickey navigator, the radar navigator; we had a radar ship then. I still had Snyder; I got rid of him after awhile, too, and got a new bombardier, Clyde.

I had three navigators. The pilot east navigator, which is the man that sat up in the nose, looked at the maps and checked where you're going. The regular navigator was the dead-reckoning navigator; shooting the stars and the moon, and time and distance and altitude, and things like this. Then the mickey navigator ran the radar.

Most of our missions were bad weather stuff. We would be dropping through the overcast to bomb targets. Most missions were unobserved until the next day when the P-38s went in and took pictures.

On most of your missions, you didn't see your targets?

That's right.

You were dropping through the clouds?

That's right.

Did you encounter any anti-aircraft fire? Did you encounter enemy fighters?

Yes, to both. At this stage of the game, we had finally gotten air protection. The long-range B-51s, usually relays, stayed with us. Like, going down to Munich is an eight and a half hour trip. You'd get up at four o'clock

in the morning and spend a couple hours in briefing. You never knew where you were going until they pulled the curtain off the map at the head of the room.

We had good fighter protection, most of the time. We did have *some* problems. I was never hit by fighters. They went through the formation looking for somebody else, or something like that. But you always had anti-aircraft fire. This is where a lot of our losses were, direct hits in the bomb bay and things like this by anti-aircraft fire. You'd go up toward Hamburg, within twenty-five miles of it you could see that the sky is just black with bursts and then you see this red creamy fire coming out. We had a lot of hits on the airplane. I never lost an engine or anything like that, but we had a lot of patches all the time. I picked up one . . .

They'd just patch the airplane?

They can patch them up, yes. I got one hit which I never did anything about. A piece of flak came through about that size . . .

Sort of an inch long . . . ?

No, maybe about a half inch in diameter . . . real ragged . . . jagged. They just burst apart; these things exploded into thousands of little pieces of shrapnel. This one came through my suit and everything else and hit me right here in the groin. It just broke the skin and burned it. It's real hot. This stuff is red hot when it hits. But I never did anything about it. Something like that, if you want to get a Purple Heart, why, you apply for it.

How many missions did you fly?

I flew thirty missions. I had one division lead, for the 2nd Air Division, which was

the entire half of the 8th Air Force. For that, you had a general riding; you put him in the right seat.

So the general is co-pilot?

He was co-pilot. He was directing the mission. I had two wing leads, we were the 2nd Air Wing, and five group leads. Then I had about, I think, ten or twelve squadron leads, and so forth.

If you were always the lead, you had a good reputation; that's the recognition of ability.

I guess, yes. The division lead, why, we led the entire 8th Air Force on that one.

What was the target on that one?

I don't remember what it was. This fellow that called me here a few weeks ago, Dick Galvin, he gave me his list of the targets that he flew. He flew with other people first. He was kind of a transient. He didn't come over with a crew, you know. He flew with one crew for a while, and so forth, and finally they assigned him to me. He was a good navigator. The reason he called me, he wrote up a story that he's sending into the 2nd Air Division. They just had a reunion in Kentucky. He was writing this story about one mission that we went on. It was a scrubbed mission after a bit. We had a lot of problems and he wanted me to verify the facts.

What kind of problems did you have?

It was real bad weather. On takeoff, we were held on the ground for probably an hour and a half, two hours, to get enough ceiling. If we had fifty to a hundred feet, we would

go. We sat there and sat there and sat there and finally they gave the word to takeoff. We're loaded down with bombs. We had long runways, but, as he described it, "We gave her the throttles, and we lumbered and we lumbered and we lumbered, and finally, yanked this thing up into the air and started climbing." We climbed out on a radar radio beacon, and headed for that.

Each group had their own meeting, so to speak, their area where you congregated to get into formation. It took us some time, an hour and a half, two hours, to get into formation, with these big one thousand to twelve hundred ship formations. Why, it took a long time to put all that together.

How much were you carrying in bombs?

We carried, I think about eight tons. At any rate, we get off the ground and get this real heavy vibration. I told them, "If we can't get this thing up eight hundred to one thousand feet, everybody's going out over the side." Well, there was a lot of grumbling about that; they weren't going to bail out. Finally, we got up to elevation and broke in the clear, in-between cloud layers, and the vibration settled down.

What was the elevation?

Probably about two thousand feet, something like that. The vibration wasn't anywhere near as bad but I could still feel it. I got the engineer and I had him get up in gun position, which was a top turret, where he could look back to check. "Part of the left, vertical stabilizer is missing," he said. We had twin rudders on this airplane, of course, and part of the left side was missing. That wasn't good.

I told them, "If this thing starts again, everybody out."

I asked the navigator for a heading for the Wash. The Wash is, not a tidal basin, but a big area of water that comes in north of East Anglia. We used it for bombing practice. It's a huge body of water, and when the tide was low, it was just a mud flat, is what it was.

I said, "Navigator, give me a heading."

Of course, we were in-between clouds. I didn't know where I was going or anything else. He gave me a heading for the Wash. I was going to have him dump the bombs. Well, in the meantime, the bombardier, when Galvin was going back for some reason, said, "Pull the pins on the bombs." They have a little cotter pin in there with a ring on it that keeps them safe. He went back, he pulled all the pins and he handed them to the bombardier. What happened to the pins after that, I don't know. Nobody could find them. I wasn't going to take the bombs back, anyway.

Finally, the navigator says, "OK, we're about forty or fifty miles out to sea."

I had the bombardier jettison the bombs, but one wouldn't leave, it hung up in the racks. The engineer got in there with a big screwdriver, and he pried that thing loose. We got rid of it. So then I asked him for a heading for the nearest air base.

He gave me a heading, and then said, "Well, we're really not too far from home base."

I said, "OK. Give me a heading for there."

We come down, and I actually got down to one hundred fifty feet above the ground because we still couldn't see the ground. When we first took off, the navigator said there was something wrong with his altimeter. He had instruments in the nose compartment, too. He thought something was wrong with his instruments.

He said, "I'm not getting good readings."

I asked him what his elevation was. He said one hundred sixty feet.

I said, "Well, that's all we are. We can't get this thing up in the air."

Finally, we get back to what we think is near the base, and he says, "I think we're close to the base."

We couldn't see it. First we were at three hundred feet and then I dropped down to one hundred fifty feet, and then I could start seeing patches of ground. I called in for flares. From the tower, they started shooting flares up. I picked up one flare, and I knew where I was. I made a big procedure turn, we came in, and we landed. That was kind of a hairy thing. We got on the ground. They had scrubbed the mission in the meantime. Our squadron commander, his name was Burke, started chewing me out, up and down.

"Why didn't you respond to the recall?"

I told him, "We were trying to save our butts. We weren't paying any attention to anything. We wanted to get this thing on the ground."

"So, what's the problem?" Well, we went back there and the whole vertical stabilizer is gone off this airplane. He starts shaking, "Boy," he says, "another ten more minutes, this whole tail assembly would have been gone. Kaput!" That was the end of that. "You guys, take seven days leave, R&R. Get out of here."

The whole crew went up to Scotland. We had a great time up there, visiting and so forth. While we were gone, they determined that the night they were loading bombs and ammunition on the plane, this character in this truck backed into that tail, and he broke the little fin back there that helps you control the plane. The little servo tag, that actuates the actual control surface on the airplane,

the horizontal rudder and vertical stabilizer, was what was damaged. That was what was found out.

A couple of technical things. A wing is the smallest unit?

No, squadron is the smallest.

How many planes in the squadron?

Twelve, normally.

Then next is a group?

With four squadrons.

And then . . .

Then comes the wing, and I don't know how many groups are in a wing. Then the air division, the 2nd Air Division, and then the 8th Air Force.

When you led the 2nd Air Division, that was the largest group you flew with, wasn't it? There were one thousand to twelve hundred planes?

That's right.

On some of those flights, your bombing altitude was 25,000 or 30,000 feet.

Well, we didn't do very well. A B-24 with a full load didn't do very well over 25,000 feet. We were a new innovation in aircraft. We were faster than the B-17s, we carried more load, we had a lot longer range, we could go to Munich without any problems, and things like this. But with this Davis wing, which was a long, thin wing on this airplane, when we got at high altitude with a full load, you tend to waddle. We never really did much good over 25,000 feet.

You said that was one of the important things about the lead planes. The lead plane had to have less load.

That's right.

They had to be stable because they set the target. They drop their bombs first and everybody follows that lead so the formation and everything was contingent upon that lead plane. You're the first bomber in the right place.

That's right. There are other people. Each group had a lead plane, and each squadron had a lead plane. More or less, you might say they were all independent.

So, the most important lead plane was actually the squadron lead plane because that set the bombing pattern.

The division lead selected the target. They were more or less following on that. If he missed his target by two or three miles, everybody else is going to be dropping on debris. This was the important thing; that the commanding general have everything put together properly and knows what's going on. Of course, sometimes they screwed up. We had a raid September 25 or 27. Our group, unfortunately, wasn't in on it. We had thirty-five airplanes over the enemy territory. We lost twenty-five over the target. I think they got three airplanes back to the base in that screw-up. The lead commander was a major from our base on that flight. Instead of making a procedure turn to the right, he kept left. They got one hundred miles out of the bombers screen and they were hit with over one hundred German Focke-Wulfs and Messerschmitts. They shot down twenty-three of them. They still lost three hundred people, you know.

You had flight air cover during most of these things?

We never had it all the way to Munich, but we had it pretty damn close. Oh course, the P-51s took off in relays.

Because they didn't have your range?

They didn't have our range, no. We took off, say, at five-thirty in the morning or something like that. They may have taken off at seven. It took us an hour, an hour and a half a lot of times with a big group, to get into formation to go to a particular target. They would take off and they would take you so far. An hour later, here's another group of P-51s. After this big hit that we had, we went back to the same target the next day with ten airplanes. That's all we could muster. They gave us a P-47 group as our escort from then on out. They were with us all the time. The P-47s, you'd hardly ever see them, but they were way up there above you. If you had fighters come in, boy they were down there in nothing flat. They were good airplanes. But they didn't have the range that the P-51s did.

Did your squadron have a role in D-day?

Yes, our whole group did. I didn't fly that day. I probably flew a mission once a week because of the training that we had to do. We flew three times prior to a mission to check out the airplane, to check out the people and things like this. We'd get up over the Wash to bomb and things like this, see. Then, if all of our radar equipment wasn't top notch, why, you didn't fly. That was it. I mean they put somebody else, another airplane, in there.

This was not on D-day. I flew on the St. Lô breakthrough when the troops were stranded

behind the little town of St. Lô and couldn't break out. The Germans had them boxed in. That was horrendous. Everything that they could get in the war the sent; the British, the French, what flyers they had, the Greeks, all the Americans fighters, whoever were based in England, B-25s, B-26s, A-20s, B-17s, B-24s, all flew on this thing. And this is where—I don't know who did it and I'm sure it wasn't my group—they dropped on our own troops, killed about two hundred soldiers and killed General McNair. But they got the job done.

We had a bomb line. It was a dirt road. Anything on that side of that road was enemy territory and you dropped. Well, the Germans were smart. Of course the weather was against us. It was a good clear day and there's a slight wind from the east that moved, let's say, the road back to the west, I mean, as far as the bombers were concerned. Then again we were flying about twelve thousand feet. What happened then is that they got some P-51s to fly back and forth beneath us to mark the bomb line. Everybody had to go bomb this old two mile wide stretch, or whatever it was, where the German concentrations were. Everyone had to bomb beyond that point. Well, we had a procedure turn to make, most groups to the right, some to the left, to get out of there to make room for the people behind.

Well, the Germans put up horrendous anti-aircraft fire. There are no German fighters at all. They wouldn't have stood a chance there at all. The anti-aircraft was so dense you could hardly see through this black cloud that they were putting up. Their 88s were putting up these artillery shells. Well, flyers started turning short. They didn't want to fly into this. You know you fly into this; this is what you have to do. You have to do it. They would start turning short. We had mid-air collisions. And this is when they dropped on our GIs over

there. Whatever was there, they wiped out, and killed this general. Finally, they started dropping flares up there to mark the enemy line, which helped a little bit, but by and far it was a real lack of discipline on that mission. It was terrible. And boy, there was a lot of hell they put up over that.

When you're talking about thousands of airplanes

Yes.

What is the feeling when there are that many airplanes. You obviously couldn't see that many.

Of course, we can't see anything behind.

But even then it must be an overpowering feeling of a sense of power and strength.

It's tremendous. Getting into formation for your missions, when you see all these airplanes coming together, it was just like the fountain is falling in. The next thing you know here's one solid stream of airplanes. Then when you got to the enemy coast, then we had what we call some flat gaps. They weren't too many, but you had an area where the Germans, for whatever reasons, couldn't put anti-aircraft equipment. You had these flat gaps a lot coming home. It was a race. It was every man for himself. We were faster than the B-17s so we'd go barreling down through there and all of a sudden you converge into a funnel, a flat gap, to get through, because you didn't want that black stuff on either side of you, see. And, you know, they had collisions and things like this. You had to really be on your toes to know what the heck was going on.

The British flew at night and I wouldn't have done that for anything. They would fly

over our base and you'd see these twinkling lights up there. Of course they turned them off when they got over the North Sea. But they flew like flies, no formation. They didn't fly any formation. They had what they called a carpet bagger. He used a twin engine Mosquito. They'd go to Berlin and they would drop flares to mark the target area for the British four engine stuff. These guys in the Mosquitoes would go over there. They each had a certain time to be over the target to avoid collisions and things like this, and they did a real good job of it. This was how they operated.

They thought we were nuts, flying daytime. Well, I would not go over there at night, love or money. I like to see what's happening. You never know when somebody's behind you, you know, blasting at you, and things like this. You couldn't see the enemy at night. The only time we were flying at night is when we were coming back from a long mission. You left in the dark and you came home in the dark, like in the fall of 1944. Days were short over there, you know, and extremely cold. We're talking fifty, sometimes sixty, degrees below zero.

Our electric flying suits were equipped [with a thermostat to] plug your suit into. You had little boots and gloves all hooked together. The flying suit was all electric coils. If you turned the thermostat up as far as it would go, it would burn you. You couldn't get it to heat enough to heat at the extremities. All through your middle, you were burning. You'd get blisters from burns and things like this, see.

Then your wind screen would fog up with ice. We had an armor proof, supposedly, windshield about an inch and a half thick. That thing would get so coated with ice, you'd have engineers or somebody leaning over your shoulder trying to scrape it off when you were coming home, so you could see. You couldn't see anything. They'd give us a can of

glycerine and they'd say, "Now you rub this on when you get up fifteen, twenty thousand feet or something like. You rub this all over the windshield and take care of it." You get up there and you wouldn't have any problems until you're coming home, and start letting down. You couldn't get the stuff out of the can, you'd just get one solid mass of glop, instead of liquid. So until you got down to about ten thousand feet and able to scrape the stuff off, you were practically blind. We were not much of a formation coming home. As I say, it was every man for himself.

To get home

To get home, that's right.

You came back before V-E Day. When did you come back?

I came back on a ship, the *New Amsterdam*. We left Scotland, I think, it was either 20 or 21 December 1944. We were on our own. We were not in convoy, just a fast ship zig-zagging across the ocean. The first two days out, we had a British Sunderland, a big flying boat, with us. We had that kind of range. He stayed with us for almost two days. Our departure was from the Clyde River, out of Glasgow. We left about two o'clock in the morning, something like that. We got out into the North Atlantic. It was rough. It was tough most of the trip over.

I had a cabin with another American. There were three hundred and fifty Americans like me on the ship going back for reassignment or some reason. And there were about thirty-five or forty English officers, mostly going to the South Pacific, through Canada and the States. There were Canadians that were wounded. One fellow that I became friendly with, a French Canadian captain, had one leg

off. Then there were fifteen or twenty families, English brides with their children that had married Canadians and they were going to their new home. This was all we had. The Dutch ran the ship and were the ship's crew. We had an English captain and English gun crews on the ship. An American colonel was in charge of the American compliment on the ship.

The food was excellent. We ate twice a day. Mine was six in the morning and six in the evening. You would see these English people down in the mess hall look at that food on that table. Maybe they would have a huge bowl of fresh fruit. They never had food like that in England. There was nothing like that over there. They ate bread and jam and things like this. We had a lady that did our laundry off the base. We would drop over there and we would bring them food, you know, from our tables at the base.

Anyway, it was really rough. The sea was rough and Fowler, the English captain in the cabin, never got out of bed. He almost died. I was starting to feel woozy. I probably did the right thing. I got up on deck right away and I went down and stood in line. I found out I wasn't to eat until six o'clock or something. They wouldn't open the mess hall doors. So I went back on deck and I walked around. Everyday I spent my time on the deck, and I was fine. I didn't get sick. I almost did.

They had a big compass, a binnacle, I guess they called it, on the stern ship and they had a five or six inch gun back there. I would go back everyday and I would check our course. We were more or less on a southwest course. I woke up early on Christmas morning and went down to have some breakfast at my usual time. I went back up on deck and looked at the compass and we were heading northeast.

I could hear all this activity, radio crews talking back and forth in their English—I

couldn't understand none of them at all. I finally got to talking to somebody and they said they picked up this German submarine and they had turned back, and were heading back toward England to avoid this sub. Pretty soon an RCAF twin engine Hudson bomber came on and he started circling us. Then we turned around again. We were supposed to get in early Christmas morning to Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Hudson stayed with us for a couple of hours, I guess, and then the B-24 Liberator RCAF came out and started circling us. We had been full speed ahead going back, and more less in a straight line. We kept watch of that B-24 out there. The British captain or colonel, whatever he was, in charge of the gun crews was telling us what was happening. They were in contact with this B-24.

I was with this Canadian officer with the one leg. We finally walked up toward the bow of the ship. All of a sudden here comes this Liberator down almost at mast height to the ship to our right about 2,025 yards and starts unloading depth charges. He blew that sucker right out of the water. That submarine was up at periscope depth. A few minutes later we traveled through all the debris. Then the B-24 radioed in and told us that they had spotted another submarine and he was going to wait for it up there. Then we had clean sailing and went on. A few minutes later I was walking around the deck with this one-legged captain, we were on the port side of the ship, and here's two streams of water coming at us, just like that, see. So I grabbed him and said, "Let's get out of here to the other side of the ship."

Then I hear, "Aye mate, look at the whales out there!"

There were two whales out there spouting. From our angle, high on the ship, it looked like a stream of water. It was the first time I had ever seen a whale, "Oh my God."

We pulled into Halifax about six or seven o'clock that night and what a beautiful sight. The street lights were all on, and the place lit up, things like this. God, it was a different world from what we lived in, so that was a . . .

Why were you sent back?

I had finished my tour. I was coming back for reassignment. I ended up in Las Vegas, where I got a cushy job. We had a new colonel come in. We had a general that was a wing commander at the Las Vegas Army Air Base. Pat McCarran would fly in. My friend Don Kitzleman was a buck sergeant down there. He would drive a Cadillac to take the troops out to the gunnery range and things. The C-47 would come in with Pat McCarran and Kitzleman would be in line. Pat would greet the general, and the colonel, and go over and shake hands with Don Kitzleman.

At any rate, this Colonel Mason came over there. He was in the South Pacific, operating out of New Guinea. They were a B-25 outfit over there. The general hadn't been there two weeks and we got two B-25s. I was checked out in one of them so that was my airplane, practically, from then on out. I had all kinds of missions. I flew up to Massachusetts to pick up frozen salmon that some of these wheels fishing in Labrador had caught. I flew down to Tucson. Our flight surgeon in Las Vegas had a ranch down there and they would go over the border to Mexico and they'd shoot doves. We'd bring back these cardboard cartons of frozen dove breasts for the officer's club. You know, that's all they saved was the breasts on these things. They had wheels come in. They had a light admiral and a colonel come over from Hawaii.

"Tieber."

"Colonel Mason."

“Take these people over to the Grand Canyon. We made reservations for you over at the lodge. Load them up in the B-25 and fly over there.”

I got home to see my bride-to-be damn near every month while I was down there. Some trips I had to go to Philadelphia. I went to Philadelphia twice to pick up a small carton of shoulder patches. I shipped GI gunners up to Portland to get on B-29s to take them to the South Pacific, see. I'd fly people down into the Grand Canyon and things like this.

How did that make you feel about the bizarreness of war? You come from this intense world where you're practicing everyday to fly once a week in a very serious, no joke world, and then you come back here and your mission is to go fly someplace to bring somebody's fish back.

I enjoyed it. Harry and I would take off on a Sunday morning, early, in B-25s and we're going to wake up the town. We had the El Rancho Vegas, which was built mostly with federal money, not the gaming part, but all of the housing for officer's dependents, etc. Then on up further ahead, was the Last Frontier. They were just starting on the Flamingo down at the other end. But nobody bothered us. We would take off. We'd go right down Main Street revving up the engines and things like this, wake these people that had been drinking all night. Wake them up, you know, tell them there's another world out there. We had a ball down there, honestly. I got checked out in a C-47, flew medical cases down to Burbank, and flew nurses down to conferences in Phoenix and places like that.

The kid that checked me out in a C-47, he was the C-47 pilot—we only had one C-47—was George Martin. He got out of the service as soon as he could. This is when they

formed Bonanza Airlines, which is now Air West. He was the chief pilot and mechanic. Buster was operating out of the base, but this was Bonanza Airlines. They had one C-47 that flew between Las Vegas and Reno and back. George was their only pilot. And he was their only mechanic. He had a co-pilot of course. But as I say, he maintained a C-47 and everything else by himself. He was the mechanic, and the whole bit.

I got to fly a C-45. I took a lot of trips to the Grand Canyon. I would use this C-45 which is a smaller twin engine airplane, it seated maybe six passengers plus pilot and co-pilot. It was a holiday for me. I mean, it was great; no pressure. A good friend of mine was the superintendent of flying and I was his assistant superintendent of flying, you know. [laughter] I had to rate these . . .

You said this was what, now, is Nellis Air Force Base?

It's now Nellis. Before then it was Las Vegas Army Air Base and it was both commercial and military. We had a chain link fence in between the commercial airline and the military part of the field. We used the same runways and everything. We had a hole cut in this chain link fence on the commercial side, about so square. We had a little shack there. This was a whiskey distribution area and the officer's club. People wanted to buy whiskey, you went over there and passed your money through the fence through to the civilian side of the airport and got your booze.

The C-45 we had, we called it the whiskey wagon. We flew the manager, or president, whatever he was, of the Last Frontier and his family a lot of places. Somebody took them back east one time. He would find liquor for us and send somebody off in a C-45 back

to Georgia, or New England, or Chicago, or something like this and pick up cases of booze for the officer's club, the whiskey wagon. It was great living. You could get by with anything in those days.

How long were you there before you ended up coming to Reno with the Civil Air Patrol?

I was in Las Vegas for about a year and a half, I think. I was married in November of 1946. I had just gotten to Reno prior to that time, because I was still living in this rooming house when I brought my new bride there. It was terrible. I felt bad about it. We stayed in this rooming house for a couple of nights and then we found a motel on South Virginia and then this mining engineer's place. Why, we got that house and we stayed there for quite a while.

You came to Reno on a military assignment to set up . . .

The CAP was already in operation here. I don't know if all states had a CAP, but the wing commander was Eugene Howell. He was superintendent of transportation for Sierra Pacific, the power company. Their whole complex was down on the corner of Wells Avenue and East Sixth Street. That was the entire operation of Sierra Pacific. We helped them out quite a bit. And of course Gene was there. He wasn't a flyer or anything else, but his brother, I think, was an admiral in the Navy. But Gene had a little home up at the Lake and he would let me use that on occasion. We'd go up there; my brother would come up from L.A. and my niece and her family would come up and things like this.

Well, it was a fairly active unit. We had a horse unit. Jack Leland was a retired Canadian

Cavalry officer. He lived here in Reno. He's the one that had the room in the rooming house. I shared the same room with him for a few days. Jack ran a horse unit. We had . . .

I don't fully understand what the role of the Civilian Air Patrol was. You were in it for a number of years after the war . . .

For over three years, I think.

The war is over, the bombs been dropped, the world's changed, and you stayed in the service and then continued on in this kind of semi-military organization that had been organized out of fear of air attacks during the war?

Their primary purpose was search and rescue for downed aircraft or lost aircraft. Of course, they did other things. We got involved. We had a trailer that was equipped. We had an RN, she was a pilot and part of the organization. We had a bunch of Civil Air Patrol Cadets that I worked with.

What was your rank at the time?

I was a captain. I became a reserve major shortly before I got out of the service.

The Civil Air Patrol went off on searches for military and civilian aircraft, things like this. We got these two planes through the state. We were involved in the haylift over in Ely area, White Pine County, in 1948 and 1949. It was a horrendous winter down there; cattle were starving. There was an infantry captain over there had an AT-6. He was chief of police in Carlin and used his airplane to go down and scout for the Air Force. But he would scout the country down there and find stranded cattle out in certain areas. They dropped all this hay for the cattle and things like this.

We had a huge fire. We set up this emergency trailer and we brought the firemen changes of socks and clothing and things like this. There were several people killed in the fire. It was down on Lake Street.

One part of the surplus equipment that I got was a huge truck with a big generator on the back. It was a six ton truck, a horrendous thing. Let's see, in 1948 or 1949, all the area up there around Ralston Street, all their water lines froze. The frost was down over two feet in the ground. Sierra Pacific wanted to know if they could use this rig. They had one similar to it. The huge generator took up the whole back of this huge truck. They converted that generator from alternating current to direct current. They did a real good job. It took them a while to get the water going again, but they would dig holes, say a block apart—one up there on such and such a street and one down on the corner of this street—down to the water line. It was all steel pipe, of course. They hooked wires onto each end of this line and they started putting current onto the pipes, and heated up the water lines. After an hour, or two hours maybe, the water started flowing again. So this was one of the projects that we were involved in. That went on for several months, I think.

Most everybody was in a hurry to get out and be a civilian. Why did you decide to stay in, and then decide to do the Civil Air Patrol?

To begin with, I would have liked to have stayed in the service, but I don't know if I would have had the opportunity. When I was stationed at the Civil Air Patrol headquarters in Washington, why, there again, I got into kind of a cushy job. I'd fly the General up to meetings in Detroit and down to Biloxi, Mississippi, and places like this. I flew with

him. He was a pilot. He was a good pilot. He was a pain in the butt, but he was a good pilot.

I had a lot of friends in Washington. My wife had a cousin there who a vice-president of Pennsylvania Central Airlines, which became Capitol Airlines, which is now part of United Airlines. In fact, I got a friend of mine in Las Vegas a job as a pilot. We just took a B-25 one day and flew to Washington. This was before I was stationed in Washington. I called up Capitol Airlines and I said I wanted to see Jerry O'Donnel, I'm a good friend of Betty Jane O'Donnel, his cousin. The next thing you know, I was ushered to Jerry O'Donnel's office and we talked for about a half hour. He told Paul, my friend, when to come back for a physical and interviews, and things like this. We went back to Las Vegas. As soon as Paul could get out of the service, he retired, and went back there.

Did you form friendships during the war with anybody? Are you still friends with your crew or other pilots from the squadron?

No. I kept corresponding with Paul for a long time. In fact, we went up and visited him. Two of the boys that I was stationed with came to our wedding in Pittsburgh. In fact, one of them was in our wedding party. You know, I was so involved with trying to make a living when I got out of the military that I kind of lost track.

After you got out of the military you went to college, and then decided you couldn't afford to do what you studied to do.

Well, after I got out of the military, I was going to the university, majoring in elementary education. I got this job at Albers, Albers Deming Co. it was called at the time.

Both of the owners, Joe Deming and Hap Albers, treated me great. They were great. They finally split up but I stayed on.

I had another friend here, Dick Hughes, who was manager of another firm. Before I went with Albers, he got me a job while I was going to school. I worked there and they did real well by me with the pay and things like this. I was able to support my family. My wife didn't have to work. She would have liked to because when she first came to Reno she was pretty lonely. She didn't know anybody.

I stayed with that particular firm for a long time, and then, when the son took over the business, I didn't really have a chance to participate in the profit sharing. We did participate in profit sharing when his father was there. Every year when we did the inventory and saw what the profits were, why, the old man divided it up. We probably had fifteen, eighteen employees, and he divided up the profits with us, which was great. For that reason I was very loyal. I was loyal wherever I worked really, part of my nature I think.

Then the opportunity came up to go into accounting. I got a supervisor's job right off the start with Albers. I took a lot of courses when I was working for them, in animal husbandry, agriculture, and different type courses here at the university. I had nursery experience, and all the things that I picked up on my own, you know. I'd go down to Sacramento and buy for the nursery and things like this. I went out and called on customers and traveled to Gerlach. [laughter] Another thing, I made a crash landing at Gerlach when I was with the CAP, but survived that one.

After I got into accounting, then it wasn't too long before I was superintendent of buildings and grounds for Washoe County. I spent a little over twenty years with them. I retired with a fairly nice salary. And I enjoyed it all the time I worked there.

When you got out of the service, you said you went back to Pennsylvania, first, and then decided that you wanted to come back west. You went to Los Angeles first. You tried U.C.L.A. You were married and had a newborn daughter. Then you decided that you couldn't stand L.A., and that's how you came to Reno and started college in . . .

I started all over again, that's what I did. A complete shift in my intentions. But . . .

How did you feel when you heard about Hiroshima? An experienced pilot, you were back in the States, already, but if the war hadn't ended, you could look forward to . . .

I wanted to go to the South Pacific, is what I wanted to do, when I came back from Europe. I wanted to fly a B-25 because that was, to me, the type of combat that you're really actively involved in. I mean, you're firing your own guns. Of course you had a bombardier for dropping bombs, but you could see what was happening. I didn't want to get into B-29s. They had me slated for an instructor job. I had mentioned, leaving England on the exit interview, that I would consider heavy bombers, B-29s. But I really wanted to get into, like, a B-25, or a B-26. B-26s are real hot airplanes. With B-26s you could see what you were doing. You weren't flying above the overcast, Mostly you were attacking something or somebody. You're really involved in the war that way. But I didn't have the opportunity.

Talking about Hiroshima and those places, I kind of felt sorry for the way it happened . . . the destruction of a lot of people. But as I mentioned earlier, I had no sympathy for the Japanese or for the Germans. Even with my German background, I didn't, knowing what these

people did to other people, like the Bataan Death March. I knew a fellow here in Reno who's a doctor and lived in the Philippines. He was on that death march. I know another fellow that was on it, that lived out in Washoe Valley. He was in intelligence over there and he survived. Both of these people survived the death march. But what they did to those people If you fell down, if you couldn't keep up with the march, they just shot you. I read this recently; they would pass these artisan springs on these back roads that they were being marched on. They couldn't get a drink. They wouldn't let them drink that water. They had to drink from buffalo wallows. They made them drink that water. Almost all of them had dysentery and things like this. They were just miserable people. When I heard about the Japanese admiral being shot down, "Yes, hooray for our side!" and things like this. I have no sympathy for these people.

We were humanitarians. I went down to a big Air Force cemetery in England a few times for burials. They had all these German prisoners digging graves and things like that. These people were treated, God, as good as we were. They really were. When I was in Stuttgart, Arkansas, a lady, a neighbor of ours and a good friend, came down to visit me. She had been to Fort Smith, Arkansas. Her brother was a German in the military prison there, working out in the fields and things like this. This lady stayed with me a couple of days and she told me they never had it so good in Germany as they had over here, the way they were treated. A lot of them didn't want to go home after this because of the treatment that the American's gave them. We were entirely different to these people. We were humanitarians, and they weren't.

So as far as the bomb going off over there, well, I'll say, maybe I was noncommittal. I

was glad it was going to do something to end the war over there. I was so damn mad about Pearl Harbor. That's when I told you I ran down to my friends house and said, "By God let's join up. Let's go." And I could see myself in a trench with a rifle, ending the war myself, killing all the Germans and things like this.

Nobody knows what to expect from a war. You ended up flying and dropping bombs at 25,000 feet. You can't see the target. You don't even know what it looked like until you get the picture the next day. How did you feel about that? Did you feel that you made a significant contribution? Were you proud of what you did?

Yes, I was proud of what I did. I really was, yes. I figured I earned my keep, you know. I wouldn't have done anything different, except get into a different airplane. The B-24 was not a fun thing to fly. It was work. When you were through after a particularly long day's mission, you were through. I mean, you were lucky to make a decent landing when you came home.

You were tired.

It was tiring . . . and it was hard work. You practically held the thing up in the air and carried it along, is what you did.

And in the days that you practiced, the training runs were pretty intense, too. Did you play hard in the evening? Did the men drink a lot? What did you do when you were between missions.

I didn't drink at all. I didn't really. [laughter] When I started going out with my wife, I started. We would go to Pittsburgh

and go to the William Penn Hotel. I'd pick her up after work. She was not working at the airport, she was working downtown in the reservations office. We'd go up to the William Penn Hotel or something and we'd have a drink. I'd have one drink, sometimes two. I like to drink today. On the evening I have a Scotch and water, or something like this.

What gripes me about the drinking . . . A friend of mine, he got over there late and he was pulling gliders for a while, but he was there in 1945 when most of the action was gone. He was ferrying airplanes different places. I got to fly a lot of different types of aircraft. He said, "Did you get your two free bottles of Scotch from the Queen of England when you landed in England?"

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "Every American officer that came to England was given two bottles of Scotch by the Queen."

Well, somebody else got mine. When we would come back from the mission we had to go on, the first thing we did was to go in line and march through past the flight surgeon. They checked your ears, your nose, and all this stuff, which I had a real problem with. I lost most of the hearing in my right ear. My head plugged up while we were at altitude. You wear a plug in the ear; it doesn't do too much good. When you went through the line and had your little session with the flight surgeon, it took probably forty-five seconds or a minute for them to check you over, you know. Then at the end a GI poured you a pretty good shot of Scotch, see. Well, my engineer was always right behind me and I just . . .

He got two . . . [laughter]

. . . passed it over to Fitz because I didn't drink. I didn't care for it. At any rate, that's about the way the ball went.

Is there anything about the war that happened, that you haven't talked about, that you'd like to?

Not really. I enjoyed my time in England. We went to London. We went five hours to London on a train to get a haircut. We did our tailoring over there. The V-1s, the buzz bombs, came over our base all the time. When we'd go to London we stayed in the Red Cross Club. It was cheap, and we had sort of food. After you got back to the barracks, you couldn't get anything to eat. We went to Norwich and rented a sailboat. There were lakes up north of Norwich and three or four of us in the crew, we'd sail around. A couple of people were experienced in sailing and we'd rent these little prams. We'd go to London, see a show, things like this.

You'd lay in bed at night and hear these damn buzz bombs that were coming over. They were terrifying. They'd go, "putt, putt, putt, putt, putt." Sounded like an old gas driven washing machine that came over there. Then the engine would cut off, and you'd never know Some of them circled around, some of them dropped immediately, some of them glided for a long distance. You'd never know where they were going to hit. We'd go out the next day and look at the damage that these things did. They just killed hundreds of hundreds of people. Buildings were destroyed.

Did you have blackouts every night, too?

Everywhere. The base and everything else was black. In the morning, trying to find a latrine in the fog in our base They were outside someplace, down the way. We had these cloisonne, that's what they called them; same idea. There were two officer crews to each hut. Trying to find your way to those latrines down there, you would fall down. It

was dark, pitch dark, particularly in the fall when the days were real short. We were pretty far north.

I missed the children. You never saw any children over there, in London. They evacuated all of the children. They were out in farm areas or small cities up in the country that weren't being bombed.

Between the British and Americans, we destroyed a city in Germany that had, really, no military value.

Dresden?

Dresden.

Did you take part?

No. That was after I was gone. What they did, the Germans did this to a British town, is they completely leveled it. We went up and we saw it. There was nothing left standing. It was a pretty good size city. They completely destroyed this town and they were going to try to do that with London, too. When they bombed Dresden, they'd say, "What the hell? Look what they did."

Dresden didn't bother me. I often thought about the civilians down below. We didn't think much about them. You had a job to do and if you didn't do it properly, why, you were reprimanded for it. If you screwed up, they called you in just like this Captain Burke did, after this deal with the damage to the airplane. I don't know what he was going to have done to me. I didn't respond to orders. I was too busy to respond, I had other things on my mind. When he finally found out what the problem was, well, it was a different story. It's hard to say what you were thinking back then, after fifty something years.

You flew the same plane?

Not always, no. We had a name, Asbestos Alice. In fact, I have a patch. Our co-pilot designed it, he was a pretty good artist. It was a red field, with blue trim around it. Our crew wore it on our A-2 jackets. It had a white jackass with a halo around his head and he's standing on top of a two thousand pound bomb, going down like this. And Asbestos Alice was the name of that. This fellow that I heard from recently, he tells me that we had that painted in the nose of our plane, and I said, "No, we didn't." I may have used three different airplanes that were in shape. I never used the same plane twice, so I never had a name for an airplane.

HARRY H. WEINBERG

Ken Adams: We were going to start with when you were born and a general background of your family.

Harry H. Weinberg: I was born in Magdeburg, Germany, which, until the reunification, was in Eastern Germany—at least after the Second World War. My mother was not Jewish. My father was Jewish. My father was an educator, although the family business was wholesale eggs, and had been for generations. My father was educated and was a college teacher. He was one of the first arrested by Hitler in 1933.

Your father's first name was?

Eduard.

And he was born in the same town?

In Germany, yes, also in Magdeburg, I believe. The family was my brother, my mother, my father and I.

At that time, your mother was pregnant with you, or were you just born?

No, I was just born in 1933. My brother, who is three and a half years older, somewhere in the mid-thirties, was sent to Belgium to live with my aunts. My mother and I stayed in Germany. Somehow, I don't know how, our family reunited in late 1939, in Oslo, Norway. So somehow my father got out of prison. My brother came from Belgium, and my mother and I came from Germany, to Norway. [We] actually came into the United States as Norwegian citizens. Our method of transit was as the only passengers on a Norwegian freighter that carried fish, I guess, to Panama, [where they] picked up bananas, came through the Panama Canal, and landed in San Francisco.

Do you remember any of the trip?

There's a legend [about] getting sick on bananas, because they were all green at that time. I don't really remember.

Do you have any family stories about what life was like between 1933 and 1939?

Really not. And it's clear from the few conversations I've had with contemporaries of my father He died very early. He died in 1953, so he was a relatively young man. It's that I never knew my whole father. He obviously had some very rough times in the six or seven years he was in prison. Those things that I can remember about him During the Second World War the Red Cross had a message service. Messages from all over the world would come to Americans, and back and forth. They were screened. My father volunteered to read those, because he wrote and spoke nine languages.

What languages?

I think all of the European languages. I think he spoke seven, and read nine, or something like that. This was from a guy that spent World War II working in a shipyard in metalwork.

Your mother's name?

Hermena Obenhouse was her maiden name.

It was unusual for a German to marry a . . .

That was very unusual. The Jewish religion is matriarchal in the sense that, technically, if I were Orthodox, and if you were Orthodox, you would not consider me Jewish, because the religion follows the mother, not the father. But, to the best of our knowledge, she never converted.

I arrived here at age six. My brother was ten. I went to school in Oakland, California.

[I was] in the first grade. My brother, I think, was in the fourth or fifth grade.

You spoke probably a couple of languages then, but no English.

No English at all. Just German.

Just German? You didn't speak Yiddish or Amish, you spoke German at home?

German. My brother, the same, when he started school. [laughter] Today, I look at this bilingual education, and think it's *not* desirable. It holds people back. For a while we took abuse and we were teased. Then we learned to fight back.

German wouldn't have been a very popular language. In 1941, separating German Jews from Germans was too sophisticated.

Yes.

We didn't understand the difference.

I have never been conscious of that. My wife and I recently had that discussion for another reason. I have never been conscious of religious discrimination or maybe . . . country discrimination, because I don't hear it.

Were you teased for being a German?

Oh sure. Teased, as not being able to speak English. Initially we didn't dress the same and our clothing was different. But we soon got out of that . . . very quick. I don't know how many years it took, but I was never conscious of [discrimination].

The experience didn't really bother you. Do you even remember the ostracism?

No, I don't have any negative feelings about it. I mean, I remember speaking only German, and beginning to speak English at school and German at home, and then gradually [English at] home. It just sort of happened. It was not a conscious set of things.

Your father probably spoke English.

Yes . . . very accented and stilted, as people do. I mean, people learned languages at school, at least in those days . . . but he was able to communicate, and got us through.

He had been a combination of things. He had been a business owner, and a university professor, a linguist.

The reason for his early arrest was, at least as near as I can tell, he was a very early Zionist. He was a real avid Zionist, and he continued that, because I remember having Zionist meetings in our home, in our apartment, during the Second World War.

Then Hebrew was probably one of the languages that he was interested in?

I'm sure he could speak Hebrew. I'm still ignorant in Hebrew. Of course, here we are so provincial. It's rare to find an American who speaks two languages. Europeans all do, as do the Asians.

Did your father consider going to Israel?

Again, he died in 1953. He was hospitalized in 1949, and was in a hospital for those years. His mind had slipped a cog or two, which I'm sure goes back to the abuse and things. I never knew the person that he was . . . so that's very hard. My mother died in 1941 or 1942. My brother, and I, and my mother got

trichinosis. She died from it. My brother and I were hospitalized and then recovered.

And that you got in 1941 in Oakland?

Yes, 1941 or 1942, somewhere in that period. My now stepmother came to take care of us. Ultimately, she and my father married and had two other children, my half sisters.

Where was she from?

From Stuttgart, Germany. She immigrated here in 1938 or '39. She came to the U.S. before we did.

Was she Jewish?

She's Jewish and still alive. Eighty-six, I guess she is, [but] not doing well. I talked to her last night.

There are lots of traditional European Jewish cultural stories about the family environment. With your mother not being Jewish, and your father being separated [from the family] for so long, it seems that you might have ended up with no culture.

No, we were always consciously Jewish. I was bar mitzvahed in Oakland, as was my brother. It was a horrible ceremony because it was memorized from start to finish. Had anyone stopped me in the middle, it would have been over. [laughter]

About five years ago a fellow from my father's generation—he had been adopted by my grandparents—decided to hold a family reunion. He lived in England and was an industrialist in Switzerland. He worked very hard trying to find the family, starting with the grandparents. Sixty of us gathered in the Cotswolds outside of London in a

beautiful, beautiful old castle, and had four days together. Sixty people from six different continents. About a third of the group were M.D's. Almost a third were college professors. Really most fascinating. And most of us were not conscious of all [the others]. As near as he could tell, all of the Weinbergs that he could find were represented, except one in Florida who never communicated.

Did you have any awareness of an extended family after you got to the United States? You came as a small child, so if your grandparents were alive, you probably didn't even remember them.

Some of them we were aware of. My father and his brother were on the outs for some reason. He was an attorney in New York (probably now retired). They never got along. I was aware of some aunts. My brother, who spent twenty-something years in the service, as he traveled around, met with some of my aunts in Europe. In fact, for a number of years, he lived with an aunt and her family.

As part of your reunion did anybody want to go see Germany?

Oh, we had some people living there. People had gone back. But the largest group were the California Weinbergs. There were eight of us there. We all came except for grandkids. My son did not come. My two daughters were there, my sisters and their kids, my stepmother, and my brother. We were all there. We were the largest single group.

How did your children feel about it?

I really, truly, live in the present and not the past. I don't dwell on things. I don't ruminate about things. [I am] concerned

about today and tomorrow, not yesterday. I think my children pretty much have that same attitude.

One exception may be my daughter, the youngest. She is now thirty-three or thirty-four. She lives in Israel, has now for fifteen, sixteen years, and is a veteran of the Israeli Air Force. She is the one in our family who keeps in touch with everybody. Anybody who will communicate with her, she communicates with them. She got everybody's addresses from this reunion. She has had jobs, interestingly enough, that have taken her around the world. As she has gone around the world, she has visited and contacted people. She just has a new job that will also include a lot of traveling, limited to eastern Europe and Africa. She's committed to Israel, and there's no changing her.

She lived out your father's Zionist . . .

What motivated a girl who went to school in Reno to move to Israel is beyond my comprehension. She spent half of her senior year in high school in Israel. Came back, did one year of college here, two years of college in Israel, then graduated from college here—because they told her that an American degree was better. Then got a master's degree in a combined program at Boston University and Ben-Gurion University in the Gaza. Then went in the Israeli Air Force, which was a very strange thing. To keep dual citizenship, which she has maintained, and which is still possible in Israel, she ended up working for Digital Equipment, and then International Audit for Digital. For three years she just lived out of a suitcase. Then she worked for a multi-media company, and presently has gone to work for Motorola, Israel. The Israeli office of Motorola covers Israel, Eastern Europe and Africa. She's here for training in Chicago for three months,

then back for a month, and then back here again for three months. So she'll be doing a lot of travelling. She'll be sales manager for their cellular division. She's a real career person.

My other two kids are here. The other daughter, my middle child, became an electronic engineer, and worked for Hughes Missile & Space for about eight years. She decided she wanted to be a school teacher. She came back and got her master's degree here at UNR as a school teacher. She now teaches at Glenn Duncan, which is in one of our poor neighborhoods. [laughter] It's a classroom with twenty computers in it, and twenty kids, and it's marvelous what she's done with them.

My son is a computer consultant. Works here in Reno, primarily.

Talk a little bit about the 1940s, about what you remember, what your experiences were, what war rationing was like.

We lived in an interesting neighborhood in Oakland, California. It ranged from single family houses to apartments. Pretty much all white. However, economically, it was a pretty wide spread. I was unconscious, or society was unconscious, about economic differences. There weren't any shiny cars. I had the first car in our family, a 1932 Ford.

What year did you get that?

It would have been my sophomore year in high school, somewhere around '49, '50. That was the first car in the family. Prior to that I had a motor scooter, which was the first motor vehicle in the family of any kind. [laughter] A city like Oakland had buses and trains. You could go anywhere. And you could ride your bicycle. I was aware of rationing, but we didn't have anything, anyway, so having less of it didn't really matter.

Jewish intellectuals and Europeans are very aware of the world. My guess is that your father would have read two or three newspapers . . .

Oh, no doubt.

. . . and followed the war intensely. At the same time, things were developing rather heatedly for Israel. Certainly, by 1948, it had become very heated.

But he was already in the hospital in '48.

Did you have the kind of intense European intellectual thing where your father took intellectual life seriously and talked about it at home?

The answer is yes and no. Again, the father I knew was not the whole person. I mean the prison years had been very rough on him, physically and mentally. The hospital he was in was a mental hospital. That was his primary problem. The answer is "yes" on the newspapers, the radio broadcasts, and watching things on the map. The number of immigrants that were around us, that we were conscious of, was not a great number. I guess it was after the war, the war ended in '45 or '46, there were some people that he could talk to, from Shanghai. There was a Jewish commune in Shanghai during the war. But again he was not a whole person so—and there wasn't a hell of a lot we could do. He worked in the shipyard, in the Kaiser shipyards. We lived pretty much . . .

I'm not conscious of economic things that other people had, things that we didn't have. But, we didn't have squat. That was just the way we lived. It wasn't as horrible as it is today. Television has made people aware of how others live. [laughter]

Although . . . my brother was far more outgoing than I. [It showed in] both his

academic record and his social record at the university, in the military, and subsequently, at Pacific Gas and Electric. Even today, in his retirement, he's running around the world giving speeches.

Was he more impacted by Europe?

No, I think he, in the same way as I, lived always in the present. I don't think any of us dwell on history. Somewhere, we got a great deal of pride. I think both of us have gone through life trying to be achievers, whatever our scale. I'm very concerned about what other people think of me. That must have come from somewhere.

In an indirect sense, you knew something about Germany and the life of Jews. You knew your father had been in prison. I doubt that he told you detailed stories about prison life.

Never. After he went into the hospital, some of those people that knew him, or knew of him, told us some things. I was in the sixteen, seventeen, eighteen year old age range. I think at that age you're not conscious—those things are not important.

The people that came from Shanghai, had they been in concentration camps?

Most were hiding out in camps in Shanghai. Many of them were in business in Shanghai. That was not prison. That was the route they took to get out of Germany.

I wish I understood how my father arranged to get out of prison. I'm sure there must have been some bribes. We didn't arrive exactly bagless. We had a certain amount of furniture, and a certain amount of clothing. So where that came from . . . ? The properties were all confiscated. There must have been, you

know, money in coffee cans in the backyard, or whatever it was. How the family got back together, I wish I understood that story, but I don't. At the time I guess I could have heard it or learned it. I had other concerns.

You couldn't have avoided the pictures in Life magazine that were taken . . .

Just didn't look at them. I remember, [in] my university years, there was a movie way before *Schindler's List* that showed the concentration camps. I just walked out. I had a recent trip to Washington D.C. Walked around the Holocaust Museum. Had no interest. You couldn't push me into that thing. Those are just not things that I want to talk about, or think about, or be concerned about. I don't deny that they happened. Horrible things happened. It's just not something that I want to dwell on.

You graduated from high school in 1951. America was off to a new war by then. You came [to the U.S.] as almost the ideal immigrant.

I guess it was while I was in college, I heard my brother on the PA system, and he had a trace of an accent. Just slight, you wouldn't hear it in talking to him. But then he was ten years old [when he came to the U.S.]. I was six years old, and I don't think you heard any accent from me. At least, I've never been conscious of it.

Do you still speak German?

No. A word here and a word there. I really don't understand it. Couldn't write it for many years.

In college did you study a language?

Not in college, no. Forced to in high school. French. It was a whole new experience. Useless. [laughter] Hopefully, they teach language better [now]. My favorite example about language, my wife took Spanish all the way through high school, and all the way through college. On our first trip to Mexico she was great on museum signs, but out to lunch with the cab driver. [laughter]

What kind of a world did you look forward to when you graduated from high school? What did you plan on doing?

My brother was more motivated than I. I got out of high school and didn't have a plan. He had been contracting for the forest service, cutting gooseberry bushes out of the forest. He convinced me that I should go to work with him. He convinced me to go to college. I hadn't thought about it. I was really out to lunch. I started college and pledged a fraternity—and that was a drastic mistake, because fifty guys were going in fifty directions, and I had to go on every one of those directions. I dropped out of college after one semester. The university and I reached an agreement that I was in the wrong place.

Which university?

Berkeley. [Then I] started a machinist apprenticeship at Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard. The one big thing, [during] my semester at the university, I met what is now my wife. That motivated me to do some night school, and then volunteer for the draft in 1953, I guess it was. I went in the Army and came out with the GI Bill, which, along with a part-time job, enabled us both to go to school. This started my career path. Then things sort of happened.

It sort of happened, or did you have some plan? By the time you got out and you had your GI Bill in hand, and were ready to go to school, did you have a plan?

To get married. In fact, I got married. I came back from overseas, got married, [and still] had three months to go in the service. My wife had been ill, and had a touch of TB. She wasn't really sick, but in Oregon in those days, they put you in a sanitarium. You want to see pictures of a mixed marriage? I was black from being in the tropics, and she was white from being in the sanitarium. [laughter] I spent the last three months in the service in Herlong, California. I went back to school, and for some reason I started out in business and accounting, and graduated in that.

You were back in Berkeley now?

Yes, graduated with honors. Started out in public accounting, and very quickly realized I was in the wrong place. Because it was a large firm, I was able, after fulfilling the requirements for the CPA certificate, to move from audit to management services. I lasted there about six or seven years, and then started into management. I've never really looked back. The world has been very good to us. I know that people are suffering today. We have never wanted very . . . we are not lavish people. The kids were all educated.

Oakland remained your home?

We grew up in Oakland. Our first house was in Oakland, relatively near the university. Our first home that we bought was in Belmont, south of San Francisco, then Burlingame, and then San Mateo. A brief stint in the state of Washington, and then to Reno. The bay area has been home until twenty-something years ago.

In Europe, particularly in Jewish society, there were clear role models for what a person could be. Your father being sick, and without the supportive society with uncles and aunts around and other people to look at, it would appear that one of the things that you didn't have, were role models.

For whatever reason, I think I never expected anything. So everything I was able to achieve was good. I guess in life, too. My boss [in] my first job out of public accounting became my partner and mentor. Subsequently, in the years I worked for him, he became a very wealthy man. I negotiated a deal for him in 1968. I was able to hand him a cashier's check for ten million dollars. That's a lot of money today, but it was a hell of a lot more in 1968. This did not make him a happy person. He became a recluse. I have never aspired to be wealthy in that sense of the word. It didn't look to me like it was a thing that would help achieve whatever is a good life. He had things, but he worried about his things. Things have never been a big deal for me. That made life very easy. I didn't aspire to wealth.

Have you in recent years thought about the Second World War at all?

No. I guess I do get concerned. I am a listener of news, a watcher of things, and I'm an avid reader. The stupidity of man is always greed-oriented. I remember shocking my stepmother in the fifties, saying to her that social change will come on an economic base, not on a social base. The equality fights and the racial fights were going on then. That is sure true. The greed of people, increasingly, in this country and other countries, appalls me. This willingness to step on anybody to achieve what you want, I don't understand where

that motivation comes from. The untruths that are told. The next technological change I want to see is a truth meter [that can be used] when people are being interviewed on TV or in person. People, and politicians, will sit there and bullshit flat out, or tell untruths. It's just appalling to me. I don't mean the kind of puffery that's allowed a salesman, but just flat-ass untruths. You really see it now with the people running for president. They don't even believe in what they're spouting. At least their history says that they don't believe it, I don't have any evidence of it. What makes people do that? I guess I've lived my life so that I can do my own thing and not be dependent on others.

Our immediate family gets together every year at Passover. Passover's just the excuse for getting everybody together. It's interesting that we do. There are going to be maybe thirty-five or forty people at the Weinberg Passover, with my family, my brother's and sister's families, and then some hangers on.

What's your brother's name?

Carl Weinberg. He's an interesting case, a real academic with a master's degree in sanitary engineering. He went in the Air Force. In his twenty-three years in the Air Force, other than one year in Korea, he never was in a field in which there was a text book. When I visited him in 1958 in Dayton, Ohio, he was worrying about human environment in space. What do you do with the stuff? [laughter] Fifty-eight, I mean, that's a little bit ahead of time. The Air Force sent him back to school, and I think he has two masters, but did not complete his doctorate in bio-engineering. He came out of the service in 1974, went to work for Pacific Gas and Electric, and became Director of Research and Engineering. At PG&E he had a massive R&D department, six hundred and something scientists, and

a seventy-five million dollar a year budget, primarily devoted to alternate energy. He has become a recognized expert on, particularly, wind and solar energy, and thermal as well. Since his retirement, he is just, literally, full-time on the road giving speeches at meetings and symposiums to consultants on his favorite topics, which are alternate energies, and the need for them. And he consults with some developing countries on using those energy sources—and living a very exciting life.

When you have the Weinberg family Passover, one of the key phrases in Passover is one of people in exile. What does it mean in your family?

We go through our Haggadah and the story of Passover, but it is *not* the reason for getting together. It's not the significant thing.

My brother and his family had a bad experience in the military with religion. His oldest was denied bar mitzvah on the base because my sister-in-law is not Jewish. [It was] one of those weird situations. [They] sort of fell away. I mean there's no denial of Judaism or anything, there's just no participation. We were a little bit different.

You mean denied by the synagogue, not by the Air Force?

Yes, not by the military. [By] whoever was the rabbi at the time on base. So that did not sit well, and they sort of fell away from organized religion. And as far as I can think, now, none of his kids are followers either.

Your daughter ended up being the only person that saw Israel, and religion as being . . .

Her [reason for] living in Israel is not really religion, it's that way of life, I guess. I

don't know. I've only been once. I'm about to go again in October as part of a larger trip. Why would anybody choose to live in that place? I mean, that's just like beating your head against the wall because it feels so good when you stop. [laughter] I would not choose to live there. Bless the people that do, but that's a hard life. Just two weeks ago we visited her in Chicago. She just wouldn't even consider moving back here. It's not even a topic for discussion. And she's aware of all the hardships, she's been there for enough years. But she makes her life there.

I think the kids, too, live pretty much in the now. My other daughter made the career change. That's a gutsy thing to do, I think. I don't know that I would have. I had made a transition. Mine wasn't a change. I wouldn't go back to public accounting for all the rice in China, when my certificate is current in three states. It gives credibility when consulting, somehow, [on] my board memberships. It does, you know. It carries a certain stigma, sometimes positive. Not always. [laughter]

More discrimination to being a CPA than being . . .

I don't think that any of us live in the past. The highlight of some people's lives were their military years. I wouldn't trade my two years in the military. The Army was very smart and sent me someplace where I was not [in a] military [role].

Where were you sent?

Eniwetok, in the Marshall Islands, the atomic test site. In those days the Army was a lot smarter about their personnel policies. They knew who was good and who was not good. Most of the officers were West Pointers. It was a joint task force, but the Army officers

were West Pointers. We had almost no career NCOs, because it was a hard life with the highest suicide rate of any military installation in the world.

Why is that?

Well, partially because when there was a test we were busy. [Otherwise], there was nothing to do, so we didn't do anything. You had to entertain yourself. That's very hard if you're used to being told when to brush your teeth and when to stand in formation. They learned not to send the career military there, and sent their better officers. I think, in those days, they knew who were good officers.

What rank were you?

Started out a private and ended up a corporal, actually, specialist at that time. I had a very hard time because over there I was a canvas and other repairman, and a lifeguard. When I came back to the states, they made me a lifeguard on this military base in Camp Irwin. Do you know where Camp Irwin is?

No.

Do you know where Barstow is?

About the middle of the desert?

Yes, well, forty miles next to Barstow was Yermo, which is a big Marine base. And forty-five miles straight out at the end of the road is Camp Irwin. My first morning as a lifeguard there, I threw a kid out of the pool. In the afternoon, I was back to being a canvas and other repairman, because it was the colonel's son. [At] Eniwetok, which was all male, there was rank, but rank did not give you anything. If I, on the beach, chastised an officer, it didn't

matter. If he was screwing up, he was screwing up. Here I lasted one morning by throwing the colonel's son out. The Army was a good place for me but they . . .

How many tests did you witness?

The last of the atomic and the first of the hydrogen. Witness is the right word. You don't see them. If you ever want a basis for having religion, go see that. They would give us these glasses [of] foam rubber—dark. We were not that far off the equator, you would look at the noon sun, and you would see a pinprick. You would face away from the blast—I don't know how many miles the blast was away—and when the thing went off, the light hurt your eyes, and, of course, [there was] the absence of air to breathe. We were hundreds of miles, probably, from the blast. I'll let you know, there's a power out there. It was a scary, scary experience. I was fortunate, or unfortunate. After the blast, we looked for fish and plant mutations with the University of Washington, [which] came there and did some tests. The mutations were horrible, just horrible. Radiation's scary shit.

How did you feel about that? You may not be the designer of the bomb, but in a way you're part of moving the technology along.

I don't know. I really did not concern myself. We had a fellow, same rank as I was, who was a Ph.D. in nuclear physics, with us as an enlisted man. He could have been given commissions, but he was not going to do that kind of stuff. He was stuck in Eniwetok anyway. [laughter] That's what we were paid to do. All the big money. I was paid twelve dollars and eighty-eight cents. I don't know if that was a week or a month, but it couldn't

have been a day. [laughter] But it was good for me in the sense that we didn't have any of that military bullshit, because I did not adapt to it very well.

You went through basic training?

Oh yes.

And then?

School. I was almost finished with my machining apprenticeship. The Army said if I wanted to be a machinist in the Army I would have to go RA, which meant four years versus two years. And I said, "No thank you." So they made me a truck mechanic. I got to Eniwetok and—I don't know if you've ever been in the tropics, but the tropical weather is not good for trucks. [They get] rusty and dirty and crumbly, especially on Eniwetok. Eniwetok was a big landing strip with one paved street. I saw those dirty trucks, and I saw this empty sewing machine. No one was fixing the upholstery, and I said, "I want to be a canvas and motor repairman."

They said, "OK."

So I learned to sew, and became a lifeguard along with that, because there wasn't a hell of a lot to do. We didn't play war games. Basic training was hard for me. I mean, we slept in the room with the rifles. That took a couple of weeks just to adjust to that.

You've met my son. How the hell I have sired a gun nut, and probably the only Jewish He's not a redneck, he's a crimson neck, which is a higher order. [laughter] Unbelievable. But my fault. He had two summers he spent on ranches in Idaho, and he came back, and he's more Idaho than Idaho. [laughter]

But you were the opposite.

Yes. Life does strange things. We bought a business, and among other things, [became] a gun distributor. I just lived with that for about fifteen years. It was horrifying.

You were a pacifist, for lack of a better term, but certainly not a gun person. You end up being there with the ultimate weapon, the biggest weapon we've managed to build.

Yes, but it was already there. We were still peons. It's like blaming the janitor for something that goes on at some think tank. I just didn't think about it. I wanted to get the hell out of the Army, get to school, and get on with it. I've always been concerned with the future and not the past.

But you're right on these people. I mean, you see with the veterans of foreign wars, and those guys that lived their life for the American Legion, some of them The Vietnam thing was ugly and some of those guys were affected And now we got it with the people that went to Desert Storm Somehow, people can't get on with things. I see those guys with their American Legion hats, and all that bullshit. I just don't understand that.

I can see it for some of them because of the years I was in [the Army]. I'm [sure] it was true of the Second World War. People who had never left the county or the city they were in, came and mixed with people. We had this on Eniwetok. We had some crackers from the South that I'm sure had never had as good a bed. They had never had a sack full of clothes before. But what mechanics they were! They pulled World War II trucks out of the lagoon and made the damn things run. I mean, no parts depot, no nothing. They were obsolete machines. Made them run. But they learned about the rest of the world. I guess it's the best thing, or it must be the biggest thing, that ever

happened to them. They live in that. Look at this thing with the fiftieth anniversary. Well, you're living part of World War II. Christ, that's all that's happening. It's a horrible thing. I can define what happened, what was wrong, how it ended. [Now it's] done, go on.

We're going to get into it in Bosnia again, probably. What happened over there? It's greed somewhere. All this shit has got an economic base.

That's kind of your general conclusion of man

Yes!

Man is driven by economics?

What motivated any social change? Now, we're talking about doing away with affirmative action. When people needed good help, they didn't care what color they were, or what religion they were, or how tall they were, or what gender they were. If you need a machinist, or you need a bookkeeper, and the guy's purple or the woman's purple, hire them. That's the only way to solve it. It's not forcing an action. All those things have an economic base. Progress has an economic base, not a social base. It isn't a matter of what you write, it's a matter of what's economical.

And the people like Hitler and Mussolini?

What really motivated them was greed, wasn't it? What did they want for themselves?

What's happening to these developing African nations [is] just a horror story. One government stealing, and then another government stealing. What a horrible thing. [The same thing happens] even in the Caribbean, and some of those places. People in South America getting rich, and then being exiled.

Some of the things that come out of the religious right are scary. Even in this country, the growth of neo-nazism and those things, is really frightening. But what the hell can I do about it? Support the ADL, maybe. Am I going to stand on the street corners and make an ass of myself? No, I don't think so.

Everybody questions if the neo-nazis, or any of the right wing, are related to past movements? Or is it nostalgia? Are they driven by the forces of today?

Well, it's not any different than this militia crap. I think it's the same mentality. It's this business of somebody wants to be boss of somebody else, so I'm going to start my little cult, whether it's wearing camouflage or wearing swastikas. I want to be the boss over you. You join because you like being told what to do. Is that any different than the ones that join some of these religious cults? It's somebody wanting to be the boss of somebody else.

Why did people follow Hitler?

Hitler was elected.

But why did people follow him?

Because they see the world in blacks and whites and haven't got time, or intelligence, or patience to negotiate the grays. Increasingly, people and companies are thinking short term, not long term. How many companies are thinking of where they are going to be ten or twenty years from now? They're worried about next quarter's earning, aren't they? It's more important that they make twenty-nine cents a share; not thirty or twenty-eight, twenty-nine. To run the goddamned business you need twenty-nine cents a share. That, I

think, is where it comes from. We run our companies short term, and we run our lives short term. We don't mix well.

A guy—I don't know who the hell he was—was philosophizing about the negative aspects of computers in the classroom. That the classroom used to be a place where you learned group action, intermixing, and getting along. The more you pursue this computer thing, the more individual learning that becomes. I hadn't thought about that. I dwelled on it because my daughter had just finished the technology camp at the school of education, which is a blending of computer and video. The topic was current. I hadn't really thought about that there is a negative aspect. It doesn't mean that we should throw all the computers out. I originally thought that there wasn't any negative to it.

The Second World War kind of ended the nineteenth century. European culture and everything pretty much was different after that. The traditions that your family would have experienced, for maybe three or four hundred years prior to that time, were never the same. What comes out the other side, is living for today only, the short term.

Worldwide, if your father was a shoemaker, you were going to be a shoemaker. His father was a shoemaker, and your kids were going to be shoemakers. You didn't even know what was happening inside the banker's house. Television's changed a lot. You can look in the banker's house, now, so you're not happy being a shoemaker.

Does that make everybody focus on next quarter's earnings, though?

No. I think that you don't have the structure. The family is the key. Divorce now

becomes almost so goddamned easy, it's easier to divorce than [to] resolve the problem. [Just] see the number of people that are married and divorced four or five times.

I used to throw out applications, when I was hiring, when people were transient. You know, the people that stayed two or three years, and moved on, or up, or sideways, or whatever. Today, you almost throw out the application [for the person] that's been ten years somewhere. In the old days, you started out as a stock boy at J.C. Penny, and ended up the chairman of the board. Today, that's not even desirable. It's not good for you because you don't get the cross-pollenization, and it's not good for the store because the store doesn't get the advantage of . . .

An example, when I went to business school at Berkeley, there was a core of prestigious, renowned professors, professors that had accomplished something, especially in finance and accounting. The bulk of the faculty was young guys who had just gotten, or were about to get, their Ph.D.'s from elsewhere. They would stay two, three, four, five years. One out of twenty would stay permanently, and the rest moved on. The department stayed fresh because it was getting a cross-pollenization. It would have been impossible in the fifties to get all three degrees in the same place. It just wasn't done. It wasn't acceptable. Today, it's very common. A guy gets his first teaching appointment, and he stays. That's no good for the school.

Look at the goddamned suite in the business school that's full of ex-deans, all of whom negotiated tenure on the way in. It's an ugly sight. What good are they? Three or four years ago the journalism school, which has a faculty of seven or eight, had two tenured staff that they were offering to anybody, they were just keeping them employed. They'd pay them. This whole tenure thing is ruining

the university. You're not getting this cross-pollenization. I don't mean the scientist shouldn't be doing research, but what research can you do in accounting, for Christ's sakes? Teaching is not emphasized. The brownie points are in publication. So this university has three or four publications, that I'm aware of, that are just shit! That's a waste. The emphasis should be on teaching.

But anyway, back to your thought about the short term. I don't know what makes us change. The breakdown of the family is certainly the key to that. But there aren't the supports. We accept illegitimate children. We accept divorce. We take the path of least resistance. I don't see any social changes reversing that, either.

The end result, to be facetious, is you get down to going from the quarter to the month, from the month to the week, from the week to the day, from the day to the hour. Then everything is based on, "What did you finish this hour?" In some cases, in a law firm, you're not even being facetious. They're focused on billed hours for this day, for this moment.

Well, you've heard the story about the lawyer at Saint Peter's gate. Saint Peter says to him, "My God, I thought you were a lot older because I have a record here of billed hours." [laughter]

Look at this Ken Hubble, for Christ sakes. Probably the top law firm in Little Rock, which is not a backwater. We're not talking about a general store and a gas station. Cheating his clients on bills, for Christ sakes. So go north and become part of our government. What's happened to the sense of harmony? I have a price. I don't know what it is, but it sure as hell ain't a hundred dollars, or a thousand dollars.

Once, in my position with a restaurant chain, somebody tried to bribe me. It was six

months after the event when I realized that that's what it had been. I'm so naive. I really see the world from my head.

This summer, my wife and I just had our fortieth anniversary. We have not wanted for anything. We've lived. Our kids are grown up. That doesn't mean we didn't ever get pissed [or] we don't get pissed today. You couldn't do, economically, what we did, starting today. I started working; six months later we bought a house. Since the day we were married we've had two cars. We never lived lavishly, but we've never wanted for anything. I never said, "I got to do this," and not been able to do it. I don't think that's possible today. We talked earlier about wages. I don't think kids today have that kind of money. I don't think it's possible.

Was that because the war disrupted the economy, and then suddenly, afterwards, there was a huge expansion. Everyone had jobs.

Yes, and tradition didn't matter.

And you became a part of the magical fifties where . . .

. . . qualifications didn't matter. You filled out the application, and if you fit, you got whatever the hell it was. If I have any regrets, and I'm not sure it is a regret, is that I didn't go to graduate school. [I was] accepted at both Berkeley and Harvard. I had a scholarship to Harvard and said, "Hell, I want to go to work." What made me want to go to work? I had no reason to go to work. I had the GI Bill. Would my life had been different? Sure, it would have been different. Would it have been better? I don't know. I don't think so. It couldn't have been better. Even people our age [are] now getting divorces, for Christ's sakes. What kind of a world is this?

My kids, all of them, have careers. All of them are doing very well. School teachers don't make any money, but that's their own damn fault. I don't know that that's the norm today, either. I think there's more below the line than there are above the line. That wasn't the case in our years. You decided where you wanted to go to work. I remember picking CPA firms. A friend of mine still was a partner of Price Waterhouse when he retired. He went to work for Price Waterhouse because they didn't require [he wear a] hat. We're talking career choices in San Francisco. [laughter] I was going to be a public accountant for the rest of my life. I chose Arthur Young & Co. because they paid me twenty-five dollars more a month than anybody else out there offered me. There wasn't a question that all the big eight didn't offer us a job, [or that] all of the big eight weren't at Berkeley recruiting. I don't know that any of the big eight come here to recruit.

I just had a conversation a week ago with one of your June graduates, a finance graduate. A finance graduate from this university is qualified to sell life insurance, or become a stockbroker trainee. Why doesn't anybody tell them that's all they can do, before they put the four years in. Plus, even then the jobs are hard to get. A kid told me he went to work for a life insurance company. There were 100 applicants for four positions.

To sell life insurance?

Yes, for a good company. But the point is, these kids don't have opportunities. Graduates are driving cabs, and washing bottles in laboratories. We didn't have any of that.

Tending bar at the Silver Legacy?

Tending bar at the Silver Legacy, and glad to have the job. We recently had dinner in

Chicago with the daughter of a friend of ours, a graduate from Thunderbird in international trade. She can't find a job, a college graduate from Arizona State—I don't know what her grades were. Her boyfriend [is in] the same shape. A licensed engineer, undergraduate, can't find a job. We didn't think about finding a job. We talked about selecting a job. That's a big, big difference. And I don't know if it's going to get better.

My wife, we haven't talked about her. She really has motivated me all my life. She's director of the state job training office, so we're very much into employment. Today, somebody is going to have five different careers, maybe in five different communities. We had seventy-five, eighty percent—whatever the number is—control of our own lives; where we lived, what we did. Today, I don't know if people have got half that much control of their own lives.

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